MESSAGES
FOR THE
MORNING WATCH

C. G. TRUMBULL

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Devotional Studies in Genesis

By
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Editor of The Sunday School Times

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Foreword

NO one who has not tested it for himself can know the enrichment of spending time in the early morning, before entering upon the day's work or even breaking one's fast, alone with God in prayer and in the devotional reading of His Word. This habit of keeping the Morning Watch, as it is called, is undoubtedly being used of God for the complete making over of many lives that have already been committed into the keeping of His Son.

In following this practice, it is well to precede the reading of the Bible, each morning, with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will plainly reveal to the reader the particular truth or message that He has for him in the Bible passage of that morning.

The writer had found in his own observance of the Morning Watch that the messages suggested for his personal needs were so rich and often unexpected that he noted them down for his own keeping and reference. It was in this way that most of the messages in this series came into being. They were not written primarily for

publication, but for personal use; and they are often of very personal application.

The writer's practice has been simply to read until a needed message was received, without uniformity or system in the amount of Scripture material read each day. The purpose has been to refrain from any hard and fast method of division of material, in order that there might be entire freedom to receive the needed truth.

If any of these very personal jottings are suggestive to others in the daily fight, the writer will be grateful for the privilege of sharing his rations and ammunition in this way.

C. G. T.

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AND God said, Let there be light: and there was light. Genesis i. 1 to 3.

There is no birthday in any one's experience equal to that day when God says to him and for him, "Let there be light." For, while the elements had to obey God in His blessed fiat of light for them, we have the privilege of choice,—obedience or disobedience, when He offers His light to us. If we do not use and live by the life-giving light that God offers us, then the light that is in us is darkness; and how great is the darkness! (Matt. vi. 23).

The unspeakable blessing of light is one of the first things recorded in this first word of the Old Dispensation, and it is one of the first words of the New Covenant: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (see John i. 4, 5, 7–9). For me, if I will let God empower me to use the light that He has made for me, is the pledge that my pathway shall be "as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18).

AND God divided the light from the darkness. Genesis i. 4.

That division of the light from the darkness

was forever: so long as darkness may exist. The darkness has nothing in common with the light, the light has nothing in common with the darkness. What God hath put asunder, let no man join together. The sharp line of cleavage between the two, established by God, was the first act of God's blessing after He had created the unspeakably rich, life-giving blessing of light; and it will be the last act of God's as He brings to an end this age in which we live, the age when the powers of darkness are permitted to live and to work,—and for the last time divides the light from the darkness, as the darkness goes out, and the eternal reign of light is ushered in. "For there shall be no night there" (Rev. xxi. 25).

The Devil does not like this sharp division between light and darkness. He counts it unnecessarily sharp, and wants us to count it so. Often he succeeds in this; it is his mission to persuade us to join together what God has put asunder. Let us hold, as our hope of eternal life and eternal light, to the God-made division of light and darkness, in every choice, thought and action of to-day.

AND God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and the fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed

thereof, upon the earth: and it was so. Genesis i. 5 to 11.

The first record of the first created life, even life in its lowest form—vegetable—declares that God's will for this life was that it should bear seed and fruit for the purpose of producing more life, and that the seed and fruit of any life is after its own kind: whatever kind it is, such shall be the kind that it reproduces and passes on. And the fruit that a life bears contains the seed of more life of the same sort. There has been no change in God's expressed will for all life that He has ever created, up to life in its highest spiritual form,—yes, even to the Life that was not created but that was in the beginning with God, and through whom all things were made: Jesus Christ, the Word, the Son of God. We are here to bear fruit, in which shall be the seed of new life. Those who are doing God's will by living in Him in whom are the light and life of men, are bearing fruit by calling into spiritual life those about them. That is what we are here for; to spend our lives in soul-winning and soul-building. If we fail to do that, we are still under this first law of life, and we are bearing fruit after our kind, whether we know it or want to, or not: if our kind is unworthy that is what we are causing others to become. Always it is "after their kind."

TO give light upon the earth. Genesis i. 12 to 15.

All this tremendous creative power of Jehovah's was directed toward one single object at this time: the making of the earth a beautiful, perfectly equipped home for His children. The lights were in the firmament of heaven, some millions of miles from the earth: but they were there *to give light upon the earth.* If our heavenly Father wrought such stupendous acts of creation for our physical dwelling-place, is not His omnipotent, creative power equally at our disposal for all our needs to-day, and above all, for our spiritual needs, which are our most baffling and difficult, and in which we are most hopeless without Him? Later, His Son came "to give light upon the earth." We need not be in darkness one instant of this day.

TO divide the light from the darkness. Genesis i. 16 to 19.

In the original creation of light, recorded in verses 3 and 4, God the creator divided light from darkness. Now, when God commits specific light-giving duties to certain of His creations, He makes it a definite part of their duty to divide the light from the darkness. So it is in the spiritual world. God has once for all divided light from darkness: they can have noth-

ing to do with each other. But God also entrusts to His children, as co-workers with Himself, the responsibility and privilege of dividing light from darkness.

We must lead others from darkness to Christ, and insist, for ourselves, upon a rigidly and relentlessly sharp line of cleavage between those things which belong to the light and to the darkness. May the God and Father of all light, and the True Light which lighteth every man, keep our vision clear and our will true!

AFTER their kind . . . after its kind. . . . Be fruitful, and multiply . . . after its kind: and God saw that it was good. Genesis i. 20 to 25.

Seven times in these half dozen verses recording the creation of the fishes, the birds, and the beasts, are we told that each variety of creature was made after its own kind. And, like the earlier vegetable creation, also after its kind, the life purpose of these fishes, birds, and animals was to be fruitful and multiply, each after its kind. Do we dare face the thought for ourselves? It is a fact of our lives, whether we dare face it or not. We are multiplying ourselves in others all the time, by our unconscious personal influence, and we are helping all the time to make others after our kind. Is "our kind" of the sort we

would choose for all our friends and neighbours and dear ones? Only when for us "to live is Christ," dare we make answer to that question.

LET us make man in our image . . . let them have dominion over the fish . . . the birds . . . the cattle . . . and over every creeping thing. . . . Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. Genesis i. 26 to 28.

Four facts are stated about man and God's purposes for man. He was made in the image, after the likeness, of God. There is no other such stupendous fact in our existence as that. He was to be the ruler, the master, of all living things in the earth *except* fellow man: never that. He was to reproduce himself in newly created beings like himself: and we are all doing this all the time—apart from the matter of physical parenthood—through our personal influence over others. He was to subdue the earth, and be its lord and master.

We are not to let the earth nor the interests of the earth be our master; that is a complete reversal of God's will and purpose for us. We are to *subdue* the earth, use it, rejoice in it as a good gift of God, and also keep it under, in its own place as a servant, to be used only to God's honour and glory.

Because we are fruitful and multiplying ourselves all the time in our persistent, even if unconscious, influence over others, we need to ask ourselves often whether we are seeking to live the kind of life that we should be glad to see multiplied all about us.

No one can have real dominion over even a horse or a dog until he has first won the mastery of himself. Self-mastery is not named here, because it was not lost until sin came in; but we have all lost it, and Christ-mastery is the only thing that can replace it.

God has made *me* in His image after His own likeness. That is enough. How can I continue to defile that image!

EVERY herb yielding seed . . . and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food. Genesis i. 29 to 31.

The first mention of food for man records God's provision that man should live by taking into himself that which had in it life. "The herb yielding seed," and "the fruit of a tree yielding seed," these living, multiplying, life-giving bodies were to furnish man's food. Later on (Gen. ix. 3), animal life was given to man as food, so there seems to be no limiting of man to vegetarian diet in the Bible. But the point is that bodily life can be nourished, strengthened,

sustained, only by taking unto itself that which is living. And so of our spiritual life. It cannot live, be strengthened or grow, if it is not fed upon living food. When our chief interests are in those things that have not in themselves eternal life, we are not nourishing our life by food at all. What of our books, our occupations, our conversations, our friendships? Are we partaking of living food?

AND Jehovah God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . . And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Genesis ii. 1 to 17.

In the garden which was the home of man, God put every good thing that man needed. Man had his specific duty assigned to him; "to dress it and to keep it." Moreover, he was shown at the very outset the possibility of wrong-doing, fully warned against it, and told what the full consequences of the wrong-doing would be.

That is my life to-day. I am in the midst of every good thing that I need. I am trusted with the "dressing and keeping" of my particular work, my assignment for to-day. I am fully aware of the possibilities of wrong-doing to-day, and know that the consequence of *any* deliberate, conscious wrong-doing will be, just so far, death: death to the opportunity of victory it offered me, death to my spiritual power for the time, death in other ways that only God understands. I have Adam's Eden opportunity to-day in the unwritten, clean, white page that opens before me. Jesus, Saviour, give me the victory which Thou, the Second Adam, didst win for me!

AND Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. . . . Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Genesis ii. 18 to 24.

Husband and wife were thus brought together in order that the husband might have in the wife a partner, a help, suited to his needs. And the two were to be in closer relationship than any other relationship in life, closer than that between child and parent: literally one. A little later the wife did wrong, and was the occasion of the husband's doing wrong. Unworthy they

both were, she unworthy of him, and he of her. But we do not find God saying that because of the wife's failure at a certain point she is no longer to be counted a suitable partner, a help meet; nor is the husband, because of his failure, to be cast off. They are *one*, and their oneness was not conditioned upon their perfection, but upon each one's need of the other and opportunity of helping the other.

What a flood of light this throws on the sacred marriage relationship to-day! How much of an allowance does it make for divorce, for any cause? Absolutely none. And how it shuts out from the home life, where divorce, perhaps, would never be contemplated, but where momentary separations through unlove, impatience, harsh judgment, are not uncommon, even these little breaks with God's plan that husband and wife shall cleave unto each other, and be one. Yes, even when either one has shown unworthiness or failed in any way. Failing is never confined to either one. The selfless love of Christ alone can fulfill God's purpose for your married life.

NOW the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. Genesis iii. 1.

Stop right there in your reading! We think

that we know the fact of this statement, but we do not. *More subtle* than anything else that enters into our range of experience or our powers of conception. We have all had such encounters with that serpent, we have met defeat so constantly at his hands, we have had first-hand knowledge, so many times, of his subtlety, that we think that we know it by this time. Right *there* is the *subtlety*. He wants us to think we know, while *he* knows that we do not. He wants us to think that we can foresee, this morning, how he is going to attack us to-day; and while we are thinking of this, and praying against it, and watchfully guarding against it, he strikes in an utterly unexpected way, and we fall. If we think that this is because we are young, that is a part of his subtlety: he will trap us by this mistake when we are older. If we have had mature experience of him for forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years, he has subtleties in reserve, still unused upon us, which, if we have confidence in our own knowledge of him, will make us as foolish babes before him. He is subtle, *more subtle* than any other perverted result of God's creation.

What hope is there, then, against him? Just the full recognition of the inspired truth of this warning statement of fact which God has given us here for our guidance and safety. The Devil is more subtle than any planning of ours can

guard against; but he cannot outwit God. Jesus Christ was and is and always will be more than a match for him. When we turn in helplessness from our own efforts against him to God and our Saviour, *leaving the fight to them*,—really leaving it to them,—the fight is won. But we must get forever away from the Devil-inspired notion that we can know beforehand how and where he will strike next.

AND the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die. Genesis iii. 2 to 4.

Most of our deliberate sins are committed because we believe that the disaster from committing them will not be as great as it really is. There is a sense in which the result of every conscious sin is death. It destroys in us certain powers, sensitiveness, aspiration, will, right desire, and other mysterious but vital parts of our being, and leaves us in a form of death. The mystery of the exact result and effect of sin, even upon one who is a disciple of Christ, is one that we shall probably never understand in this world; but it is certain that the effect of any sin is greater, more tragic and death-dealing, than Satan wants us to realize. "Ye shall not surely die," is the insistent refrain he keeps sounding and pounding at us: and we believe it: but it is a lie. We *do* die,—not as souls eternally lost, if

we are in Christ,—but we do in some awful way, at tragic cost to ourselves and the kingdom, receive death-wounds from all sin that we take into our lives. Christ can forgive and restore, but there is a loss to us, as there was to Adam and Eve, which in this life at any rate can never be made up to us. Only when we begin to realize that the effects of the least sin that we can think of are more unspeakably awful than anything we can conceive of, shall we begin to be safeguarded against this death-dealing lie of the adversary of Christ and ourselves.

YOUR eyes shall be opened . . . knowing good and evil. . . . And the eyes of them both were opened, and they . . . hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God. . . . I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid. Genesis iii. 5 to 10.

The result of the first sin was the same as the result of every sin I have ever committed, and the same as that of every sin that ever shall be committed. The Devil mixed in enough truth in his lying promises to be plausible. Adam and Eve did not become "as God," they did not "know good" by sinning; but their eyes were opened, and they knew evil. They gained nothing by sin which added anything to their needed knowledge, equipment or usefulness in life. No

one was ever helped in any iota of his knowledge or being by sin. Nothing good has ever come to pass from that day to this as a result or a sequence of sin, that could not have come to pass better without sin. Sympathy, breadth of view, needed knowledge: sin never gave these to any one. Jesus had all these, but He never sinned. Let us be quite clear as to this. The only new knowledge from sin was a knowledge of the bitterness, the misery, the awful loss, the taste of death, which sin always brings. These things do not enrich life.

The worst and always sure result of sin was that the man and woman did not want to see God. Before this they had rejoiced in God's presence and fellowship. Now they wanted to avoid Him. They were not easy in the thought of being with Him, for they had put a barrier between Him and themselves. The exultant joy, the thrill, the sheer gladness of life in Him, was replaced by a dull, sodden, gray misery, or worse, indifference. You've known it. I have. Why should Satan ever succeed again in persuading us to replace the one with the other, life with death? Even when he offers us—as he will before the day is over—that which is "good," "a delight to the eyes," "to be desired," oh, think of what lies on the other side!

BECAUSE thou hast done this. Genesis iii. 11 to 21.

That is the key-word of this dark record. The first sin had its immediate, direct result; and so has every sin that was ever committed. God's forgiveness of sin does not make it as though it had not been,—not even His forgiveness to-day in Christ. God forgave this man and woman; they could not have lived, otherwise; but His plan for their lives was changed because of their sin, and we may believe His plan for our lives has to be changed every time we sin. He still cared for them, and did *His* best for them, but that best could not be what it would have been had they not sinned. They were the losers for their sin, as we are for ours. The bright side of the true story is that their sin did not make God cast them off; He kept hold, and the very penalties that He ordered were His most loving efforts to reclaim them to the best that might yet be for them. I like to think of these results of their sin, not as penalties or punishments as we ordinarily use the word, but as medicine, as remedies, as God's safeguarding care. That is the only meaning of what we call punishment at His hands.

So it is with us. Let us never forget; each sin means sure loss; but God holds on to us in spite of our sin.

THEREFORE Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground. Genesis iii. 22 to 24.

God was as loving when He sent Adam out of Eden as when He placed him in Eden. The later act was as directly an act of love as the earlier act. For God is love, always and wholly love. Everything that He does is the result of His love and because of His love. This was the most loving thing He could do for Adam. What we call our punishments for our sins are always the most loving things that God can possibly devise for us. Let us be sure of this, for it is the truth. God would have been unspeakably unloving toward Adam and Eve if He had now allowed them to be exposed to the peril of eating of the tree of life and thereby living forever in their sin-poisoned natures. Just as He lovingly protected them from that tragedy, so He provided work for the man, that he might have something outside Eden to do and to live for.

Let us remember that it is God's love that works in all the hardships, the bitternesses and even the miseries resulting from our own sins. When our Edens become a menace to us, He lovingly takes them away: praise His name. His punishments are loving; His assignments of work are loving; His impoverishments are loving. For God is love.

AND Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. Genesis iv. 1 to 8.

God's treatment of Cain and Abel has often seemed to many unfair. They both offered what they had to God; why should He treat them so differently? Had not Cain a good right to be very wroth? But from the simple record of these two verses, and our knowledge of God, without reading farther we may be quite sure that there was something wrong in connection with Cain's offering and that Cain knew it was wrong. God never failed to respect any offering of His child that came from an honest purpose to please Him, no matter how faulty the offering was. But this was not so of Cain; there was some sin of which he was fully conscious, either at the time or earlier, and while it remained he could not "get right with God" by any offering.

Cain's killing of Abel may have come from the fact that, after telling Abel of God's "injustice," he could get no sympathy from Abel for his position; so, in desperation, he put Abel out of the way. "If thou doest well, shall it [thy countenance] not be lifted up?" That is all we need to know. When the heavens are brass, and it seems as though God had turned against us, let us just drop on our knees and ask Him to search

us out and show us what is the sin that is keeping Him from receiving our offering. His answer to this sincere prayer is instant. God never rejects the offering of any one whose *life* is first laid at His feet.

AM I my brother's keeper? . . . The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me. Genesis iv. 9, 10.

There are more kinds of murder than that of Cain's. Are any of us guilty of one kind? If we should be asked to-day as to the spiritual life of some one near us who does not know Christ as Saviour and Lord, "Where is . . . thy brother?" and we should answer, "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" and the reply should come back in condemnation: "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me,"—we should probably think we were harshly and unfairly judged. But Christ plainly wants us to feel a direct and overwhelming responsibility for every one whom we should reach for Him, and who has not yet accepted Him. I *am* the keeper of these my brothers. And if I am, and they are lost, their blood cries out against me unto God. When once we fully accept this truth and its obligation, there will be comparatively few about us that we cannot eventually save by winning to Christ.

AND Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah. Genesis iv. 11 to 16.

We do that with every sin, whether we want to or not. We cannot remain in God's presence with sin. It is an awful price to pay. Sin costs too much. There is no misery known to man like the misery of separation from God's presence. Nothing can make up for it,—except the sin-confessed, sin-forgiven, sin-removed restoration that is in Christ.

JABAL . . . the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle. . . . Jubal . . . the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe. . . . Tubal-cain, the forger of every cutting instrument. Genesis iv. 17 to 22.

These three men were known then, and have been known through the centuries since then, for the particular life specialties that they chose. You and I will be remembered, by those who know us at all, for the particular life specialties that we choose. Some outstanding characteristic of ours will live longer than we. What shall it be? What would we have it be, if we could have it just what we want? We *can* have it a likeness to Christ, if we will. But we must be about it to-day, and to-morrow, and every day, if it is to be that.

YE wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man. Genesis iv. 23, 24.

In direct descent from the first murderer, five generations later, came the first polygamist (verse 19). The only record we have of this man is of his polygamy, and then of his boasting of having committed murder in a way that out-distanced his ancestor-murderer. Because he was wounded and bruised, he killed; and he was proud of it. Cain's example was bearing rich fruit. Sin always does. In what contrast this stands to a descendant of the other side of Adam's house, through Seth, who, when wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, did not slay and avenge Himself, but only loved the more; and "with His stripes we are healed." Retaliation unto death: love unto life. To which branch of Adam's family do we choose to belong?

GOD hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel; for Cain slew him. Genesis iv. 25.

When Abel was dead, it must have seemed to the broken-hearted mother as though there were nothing left to live for. But God did for her just what He always does for us after our best hopes have been shattered by sin,—our own sin, or some one's else. He gave her a new hope by a new blessing. We destroy; God rebuilds.

Thus it goes on until we are broken down and won by His ceaselessly rebuilding love, and then we become builders with Him. His best blessings are always ahead. This other seed: of whom was Seth to be the father, down the ages? Of Jesus Christ. Don't reject the latest blessing and hope that God may be holding out to you. It may lead straight to Jesus Christ, for yourself or, through you, for others.

THEN began men to call upon the name of Jehovah. Genesis iv. 26.

Which means, then began a time of hopefulness and real achievement for man. For when we begin to call upon God, we begin to let God into our lives, to connect ourselves up with power, to thrill and tingle and move with *life*. God never ceases to call upon us to do this, but it is only when we respond to His call, by calling upon Him, that He can do for us what He wants to do. The men who began now to call upon the name of Jehovah were the fathers of Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and David, and Jesus. That was the kind that God made of them, because they called upon Him. Have *we* begun to call upon God, as a habitual, daily practice,—as the great, saving, empowering fact in our lives?

IN the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him. Genesis v. 1, 2.

Therefore all that I do to-day ought to be such as God would do were He in my place. If I am created in His likeness, my actions ought to be in the likeness of His actions; my thoughts, of His thoughts; my desires, of His desires; my very feelings in the likeness of His feelings. This sounds hopeless. It is not; the moment that Jesus Christ who is God is allowed to be the real Master of my life and the Holy Spirit of God enters into me, to occupy, possess, submerge, overwhelm myself and my being with Himself, then my lost likeness to God begins to be regained, restored, recreated; for if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation: and this new creation is only the returning to the first creation, made in the likeness of God. Lord, restore me to-day to Thy likeness.

AND Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. Genesis v. 3 to 27.

For seven generations the monotonous record gives us the bare facts of name, family, and age; then the monotony is broken by this record of a man who lived less than half as many years as the youngest of the others. But that half a lifetime—as they viewed it—was richer and fuller than any of the longer lifetimes, and stands out

as one of the richest and fullest in the entire Bible. The secret of it was simply that Enoch did what Adam and Eve had done in Eden before their sin, and what God longs to have us all do in spite of our sin, after Christ has taken care of that sin for us: he walked with God. That means all that Christ came to make possible. It means the oneness with God that sinks self in Him, makes His will our will, His purposes our only purposes, His work and interests our only work and interests, His life our life. A year of such "walking" and fellowship makes Methuselah's nine hundred and sixty-nine years brief and poverty-stricken in contrast. Why should we not open our lives completely and forever to this richness that Enoch knew? Let us do it to-day!

NOAH . . . This same shall comfort us in our work and in the toil of our hands, which cometh because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed. Genesis v. 28 to 32.

Notice what Noah's distinctive life-work was to be. He was to comfort, which means "bring strength to," mankind. As men laboured in their work against a curse which their own sin had brought them, he was to give them rest and strength for their toil which was the direct result of their sin. Now see how he did this, and ful-

filled the prophecy of his father. Back in Gen. iii. 17, is the record of the particular curse, or sin-result, of which Lamech spoke. Later on, in viii. 21, we find that, following Noah's faithfulness in having obeyed God at every step of the way, Noah having made his first act after the deliverance an act of gratitude and praise to God, God declares that He "will not again curse the ground any more." This seems to be the record of His removing the curse which He had placed upon the ground in Adam's time, whatever that curse was (and it could not well have been the necessity for honest toil, for this is a blessing), and that curse seems to have existed only between the time of Adam and of Noah. However that may be, the practical lesson for us is that Noah, living true to his mission *nahem*, to comfort or strengthen, did by obedience to God's will and avowed gratitude to God bring a great blessing to all mankind, and helped men to overcome a result of their sin. *That* we can all do, and we must do it if we are true to the name Christian. By obedience to our Captain's Great Commission, we can bring unto Him those that labour and are heavy laden by their sin, and let Jesus Christ remove their curse by bearing it for them. Noah had no such light and no such privilege as we have in Christ: are we as true to our light and privilege as he was to his?

AND Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh : yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years. Genesis vi. 1 to 4.

There comes an end to the time when the Spirit of God strives with the spirit of a man who is resisting God; that end seems to be marked by the end of man's earthly life. It is not because God grows tired and gives him up, but because the man has resisted the many opportunities and invitations so long, so steadily and habitually, that he has finally placed himself beyond the power of God, by starving, atrophying, killing his power to respond to God. The period when he might, if he would, accept God, seems to be the period of his earthly life; and we may have enough confidence in God's love and overruling power to believe that He never lets any unsaved life come suddenly to an end without knowing that that life has rejected Him so deliberately that it would be beyond God's power to save it.

But what an exceeding heavy obligation is placed upon us, as Christian workers, when we realize that every day that passes in the lives of those near us who have not yet surrendered to God in Christ is bringing them nearer to that time when the Spirit of God must cease to strive longer with them! *We* can be used to prevent that fatal day ever coming to pass in their lives,

if we are faithful in pressing upon them the unsearchably rich joy and gain of their accepting Christ, and if we are faithful, also, in prayer to God for them. What a challenge to personal service in witnessing for Christ there is in this verse that is tucked away in one of the earliest chapters of Genesis, in the midst of a paragraph of which some of the meanings are not at all clear! But our duty is clear.

EVERY imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Genesis vi. 5 to 8.

It would seem that there cannot be any more desperate and awful description of the possession of a man's life by sin than is given here: to have all the pictures of our God-given power of imagination,—that faculty whereby we may see the possibilities of life in Christ and the very splendours of heaven itself,—become pictures of degraded, hell-created evil, and only evil, every minute of our waking and dreaming time. When one has reached that stage through his steady permission and cultivation of sin, he is living in hell, and God's most merciful act is, as the Hebrew of verse 7 says, to blot him out. Most of us know something of the almost complete possession by sin in intervals of our life, when our better aspirations, or faculties of achievement, our power even to think clearly, were paralyzed

or atrophied by the tolerated presence of sin in one form or another,—selfishness, hatred, impurity. What if it were so with us "continually," without interruption or respite! That is the picture drawn here. And that is the possible end of all tolerated sin. Is it any wonder that God wants us to hate it, this day, as desperately and as passionately as He hates it?

NOAH was a righteous man. . . . Noah walked with God. . . . And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence . . . for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Genesis vi. 9 to 12.

The combination of the most awful temptations in their assault upon me, the universally low tone of the environment in which I may be placed today, the entire lack of any encouragement to hold to the highest standards,—all these forces and influences that would pull me down are not responsible for my going down if I should go down. Only one thing would be responsible, and that is my refusing to walk with God. Noah was righteous, blameless, and the secret is plainly stated. He had nothing to influence or help him up—except God.

MAKE thee an ark of gopher wood; . . . three hundred cubits . . . fifty cubits . . . thirty cubits. Genesis vi. 13 to 16.

What a privilege and relief it would be to us all if only God would plan and outline and describe our exact work for us to-day, in all its details, as to measurements, material, arrangements, as He did for Noah when the time came for Noah to build an ark! It would be *easy* to go ahead and do our duty then, with God's clear specifications in hand. But that is exactly what God wants to do for us, and will do for us, if we will let Him as Noah did. Noah had been walking with God, presumably for many years, as a consistent habit. Only to such a man *can* God make all the details of his day's duty clear. God has a plan for me to-day just as sharply defined in all its details as the measurements and architecture of the ark. He wants to hold me to this day's plan as closely as Noah let Him hold him to the ark building. And God can make every detail of this day's building clear to me, if I will let Him. Consecrated, wholly surrendered, Christ-sensitized responsiveness and obedience to the Spirit's slightest whisper all the day long—and the ark is built. That is the secret.

AND I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh. . . . But I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy

wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. . . . Thus did Noah. Genesis vi. 17 to 22.

The death penalty was declared; and with it the way of escape. And that is exactly God's message to me to-day. All flesh that stays out of the New Covenant that God has established is to be destroyed—forever. All who will may enter into the covenant, and take with them their families. Some people say that they could not believe in a God who made a hell. They seem to forget that with the hell He provides a way of escape: He establishes a Covenant for all who will. And the man who enters into that Covenant and leaves out a single member of his family is not up to the standard of Noah.

The New Testament (or New Covenant) way of putting this flood truth for the day's needs is this: God is faithful, who . . . will with the temptation make also the way of escape.

AND Jehovah said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Genesis vii. 1.

There it is again: "thee *and all thy house.*" God offered Noah no higher privilege, and no heavier obligation, than He offers us. When He establishes His New Covenant in Christ with any one to-day, He calls that one, in coming, to bring along his whole house. Any one really righteous

person in any household, who is not only saved by Christ for the next world but wholly mastered by Christ in this world, so that Christ lives in him, and to him to live is Christ, is Christ's key to the lives of all in that household. If any one in the household fails to come into the New Covenant, the one who is already in is as guilty as Noah would have been had he closed the door of the ark against one of his family. We must be sobered by the solemn responsibility of this truth, and rejoice in its blessed privilege. For there can be no doubt about all coming when we are ready to meet the cost: that God shall see us righteous before Him to the extent of our self-death in Christ.

EVERY living thing that I have made will I destroy [*Heb.*, *blot out*] *from off the face of the ground. And Noah did according unto all that Jehovah commanded him.* Genesis vii. 2 to 5.

God *can* destroy sin. God *will* destroy sin. The people of the earth were so given up to sin, saturated by it, living in it and of it, eaten up by it, that God's great love for mankind compelled only one thing: His blotting out of this vast black flood of sin by a cleansing flood of water, and giving the race a new opportunity in the family that was not thus sold to sin. And that same love, and even the same method, in princi-

ple, is my hope to-day. God *can* destroy my sin. God *will* destroy my sin. He blots it out in a flood mightier than that of the waters—the blood of Jesus Christ. And He saves me, that in this Christ, I, like Noah, may do according unto all that Jehovah commands me. Let me trust this heavenly Father to-day, and His Son my Saviour—Christ, to blot out my sin and to keep me from sinning this day. That is what Christ will do for me if my faith in Him is only daring enough.

AND Noah was six hundred years old. . . . And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Genesis vii. 6, 7.

Noah did not let the matter end with the fact that God had called him to come himself and bring all his household with him into the ark, the place of salvation. He did not dismiss the matter with a single earnest invitation to his family to come in. He saw that they *went* in,—his wife, and his sons, and his sons' wives. There is an enormous difference between understanding God's call, and passing on God's call, and *seeing that it is accepted.* The difference may be the difference between eternal life and eternal death. So God looks to us to see that every member of our household is not only sought, but is brought

in,—in to the highest spiritual privileges and experiences that we are having or have had. It must be done because of the waters of the flood: the results of sin. And Noah was not a young man when he did this. If we are no longer young, and have even wasted our opportunities with our own dear ones for years—the door is still open, the obligation is still upon us. In Christ it can be done.

ON the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. Genesis vii. 8 to 12.

When God cleanses from sin, He does it thoroughly and completely. His cleansing of sin out of the life of any man who will let Him is done in this same thorough way. He opens the flood of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ upon him, and on the same day He breaks up the fountains of the deep within that man's heart; and so from without and from within the sin is flooded out of his life. Until that is done Christ can get no fair chance at a life. We must let Him cleanse us completely from our sin before He can keep us from continued sinning. Some who are trying to serve Christ have never yet let God in Christ purge the sin wholly out of their lives. Father, show me this morning the mean-

ing of sin in all its blackness and horror and death, that I may let Thee cleanse me from it as Thou didst cleanse Thy world with the waters of the flood. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. li. 7).

> "There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
> And sinners plunged beneath that flood
> Lose all their guilty stains."

AND they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh wherein is the breath of life. Genesis vii. 13 to 16.

God's salvation by the ark was just as complete and thorough as God's cleansing by the flood. As we read over this entire passage, its detailed itemization and reiterations seem intended to leave us in no doubt as to this. Every one in Noah's household, and the chosen representatives of every beast, and of all cattle, and of every creeping thing, and of every bird,—all were saved. When God starts in to save, He saves to the uttermost. So Christ "is able to save to the uttermost [Gr., completely] them that draw near unto God through Him" (Heb. vii. 25).

And these were saved "unto Noah, into the ark." Noah brought them. God wants certain souls saved unto *me*, into *Christ*. He wants me

to bring them in, bring them to Christ. He may have some prepared and ready for this to-day, only awaiting *my* invitation. Noah met his responsibility, because he kept so close to God, daily and habitually walking with Him. Think of the obligation and the privilege that God lays upon us: that souls shall, by coming unto us, enter into Christ!

AND the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth. Genesis vii. 17.

The very thing that destroyed all who were opposing God lifted up to safety those who were working with God. And the *first* mentioned result of the destroying flood is not destruction, but uplifting and safety to God's loyal children. What need we fear? Why should we ever fear?

AND the flood was . . . upon the earth; and the waters increased . . . and the waters prevailed, and increased greatly . . . and the waters prevailed exceedingly; . . . and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. Genesis vii. 17 to 22.

That is the way God's cleansing flood of purification works. How the Bible writer piles up the description as the waters pile up! And not until every high mountain under the whole

heaven was covered, we are told, did the flood cease to increase and prevail. What a type is this of the cleansing flood of the blood of Jesus Christ! His redemption is upon the earth, and it is increasing, and prevailing, and it shall prevail and increase greatly, and prevail exceedingly until all the high mountains of sin under the whole heaven shall be covered. In my life there have been mountains of sin so high that it did not seem possible for them to be covered. But they have been,—not only exceedingly, but exceeding abundantly above all that I could ask or think.

AND every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark. Genesis vii. 23, 24.

The word that closes the record of the flood's destruction is a word of life, not death. Much had been wiped out, but not they who were living according to God's will. Nor shall they ever be.

AND God remembered Noah. Genesis viii. 1.

When there does not seem to be anything left in the world but God and myself,—when

everything else is swept away,—that is enough: God remembers me. And God is all love and all power.

AND God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; and the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; and the waters returned from off the earth continually. Genesis viii. 1 to 5.

All this because God remembered Noah. The forces of heaven and earth were enlisted, reversed, ordered about, solely because God remembered Noah, and had plans for him. God has not forgotten you; He has plans for you. He will as readily order about the forces of the universe on your account as He did on Noah's. His plans for Noah were also plans for the whole world through Noah. So they are for you: He will use you for the good of the whole world, if you will let Him.

BUT the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him, . . . and the dove came in to him at eventide; and, lo, in her mouth an olive-leaf. Genesis viii. 6 to 12.

God knows just when to withhold from us any visible sign of encouragement, and when to grant us such a sign. How good it is that we may

trust Him anyway! When all visible evidences that He is remembering us are withheld, that is best: He wants us to realize that His word, His promise of remembrance, is more substantial and dependable than any evidence of our senses. When He sends the visible evidence, that is well also: we appreciate it all the more after we have trusted Him without it. Those who are readiest to trust God without other evidence than His word always receive the greatest number of visible evidences of His love.

AND in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dry. Genesis viii. 13, 14.

The flood was no mere forty-day test, as most people are inclined to think. Noah and his family were shut in the ark for a year and ten days (cf. vii. 11). God's tests sometimes last a good while. But their outcome is worth waiting for.

AND Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him. Genesis viii. 15 to 19.

God had kept them imprisoned for over a year because of His surpassing love for them. And God now released them from prison into a new, sin-cleansed freedom, for the same reason. We

can trust God for our imprisonments, and we can trust God for our releases. He will not continue the one, nor defer the other, a moment too long. In each case, God's love for others yet unborn was working in and through His love for Noah and his family. So His love for us always looks out toward others through us.

AND Noah builded an altar unto Jehovah . . . and offered burnt-offerings. Genesis viii. 20 to 22.

May we be as quick to thank God for every deliverance and blessing as we are to pray for them when they are needed!

To some it may seem hard that certain of these innocent animals and birds were saved during the long year of flood and destruction, only to lose their life as they were offered up in sacrifice to God. But they were simply entering into the highest privilege that God offers us: to lose life and self in sacrificial service to Him. That was *worth* having life prolonged for a year. The animal sacrifice was only a type: with us it may be real. God has spared us and kept us through all the dangers of our life so far, in order that we may find life by losing our lives in sacrificial service to Him. Shall we come up to the high standard and attainment of these animals of Noah's ark?

AND God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. Genesis ix. 1.

As Noah and his sons were saved and commissioned to be fruitful and replenish the earth physically, so we are saved and commissioned to be fruitful spiritually, and replenish the kingdom. We must constantly be the means, under God, of the new birth of souls in Christ, thus multiplying our own spiritual birth and salvation, if we would show the best evidence of loyalty to our Saviour.

BUT flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. Genesis ix. 2 to 7.

Here is an early gleam of the great truth which runs throughout the Old Testament and the New, that the blood is the life: the truth that found its climax and culmination in the outpouring of the blood of the Son of God, that we might have life, *His* life, spotless, sinless, deathless. May I give His white life the mastery over mine to-day!

I ESTABLISH my covenant with you . . . I will establish my covenant with you. Genesis ix. 8 to 11.

When God makes us a promise, or gives us His word on any point, two facts are to be remembered: the thing *is* done ("I establish"), for

He has said it, and there is no such thing as time with God, only an ever-present eternity; and the thing *will be* done ("I will establish"), for God is dealing with us who live here in time, and that which is finished with Him must yet be shown forth to us in our future.

AND the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. Genesis ix. 12 to 17.

If God's love is so far-reaching that He puts on record a definite covenant between Himself and the animals, birds, fishes, and every tiniest creature of the earth, and then declares that He sets up a perpetual reminder for Himself, that *He* may never forget this pledge that He has made,—then you and I need have no fear of being overlooked or left out of God's infinite but particularized love, for a hair's breadth of time.

THESE three were the sons of Noah: and of these was the whole earth overspread. Genesis ix. 18, 19.

It behooved them to be pretty careful of their ways, for of them was the whole earth overspread. How would it affect us to know that the earth was now to be populated with the kind of people

that we are? That is just what is happening, within our range of influence. We are making people more like ourselves every day we live, whether we want to or not. It pays to guard the influence with which we are overspreading our world.

HE was a mighty hunter before Jehovah: wherefore it is said, Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before Jehovah. Genesis x. 1 to 32.

The special mention that Nimrod did his hunting "before Jehovah" seems to imply that this, the chief activity of his life, for which he was noted, was done before, or in the conscious presence of, God, and, therefore, as unto God. If a huntsman in that early and primitive age of the world could so faithfully live unto God in his life-work, surely we ought to measure up to his standard to-day in our enlightened and privileged Christ-era. Is our life so God-centred that every one says of us, "*That* man is living before Jehovah"?

COME let us build us a city. . . . So Jehovah scattered them abroad . . . and they left off building the city. Genesis xi. 1 to 9.

This passage is mysterious and difficult, but it seems to have this message: these people were wholly selfish in their purposes: "Let us

make *us* a name; lest *we* be scattered." There was no purpose to serve the rest of the world, only self-glorification and self-preservation. But effectiveness to this end is unity and coöperation, for in such there is always strength, even for evil purposes. God points this out when He says that now nothing will be withholden from them, of their unworthy purposes. It would have been an unloving thing for God to permit the accomplishment, in the strength of united effort, of their self-centred purposes: so, in love here, as always, He defeats the end which would only have harmed them, and breaks up the unholy syndicate. What a blessing for them that they left off building the city! What a blessing for us when God breaks up our plans for some end that—even though our intentions are good—would only harm us and others if we succeeded! It was of God's great love that "they left off building," for "except Jehovah build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

SHEM . . . begat Arpachshad . . . Terah begat Abram. Genesis xi. 10 to 28.

This long, dry list of "begats," just a lot of genealogy, does not seem to mean much, nor do the lives of the men named in it seem especially worthy of any record whatsoever. But—certain ones of them were leading on, in direct line of

fatherhood, first to Abraham, one of the giant, heroic figures of all ages, and beyond to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of men. It was worth while to have a place and a part in *that!* They did not know for what God was using them; nor do we know for what God is using us. But any one of them might have robbed himself of his intended place in this line, as we may rob ourselves of the privilege God intends for us. May we be willing, by simple duty-doing, to stay in our seemingly commonplace position of high privilege

AND Sarai was barren; she had no child. Genesis xi. 29 to 32.

The barren wife was to become the mother, in ancestry, of the Son of God. Barrenness was a heart-breaking sorrow to any Oriental woman. Emptiness of life and defeat of our purposes is a heart-breaking sorrow to us. But Sarai came to see the time when her barrenness was only the testing of her faith to a richer privilege than she could have dreamed of. So may our present defeat be. Milcah, proud and happy mother, stayed in the comforts of the Chaldean home. Sarai, her sister-in-law, childless and crushed, left the homeland and went out into a world of unknown dangers and hardships. Which of the two would you rather be now?

GET thee out of thy country, . . . unto the land that I will show thee: . . . and I will bless thee, . . . and be thou a blessing. Genesis xii. 1 to 3.

Four great events sure to come into the life of every one who will let it be so, and to keep coming day after day, are set down for me in unmistakable clearness in these few words. God asks me to get out of the country that I had supposed was *my* country, to abandon the thing that I had thought was surely for me. He asks me to do this in order that I may enter upon a new territory, or matter, or plan, which is His choice for me, and which He will show me,—yet which He cannot show me until I abandon my old position. If I do this, He will send me a blessing which He cannot otherwise send me unless I do this. And the purpose of all this—my letting go of the old, my entering into the new, my being blessed in so doing—is what? Just so that *my* life may be a blessing to others.

There will be some call upon me to-day to do this very thing: to abandon my own position, in some matter, for God's. May I obey on the instant!

SO Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him, . . . and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. Genesis xii. 4, 5.

Is not that a glorious assurance for me to-day? God said, Set out for the goal that I show thee. Abram set out for it; and Abram *reached it.* No man ever failed to reach any goal that God set for him if he simply obeyed God. Yet God sets stupendous goals for us all. They are utterly beyond our reach; but we are going to reach them, for He has said so. And reach them now and here, in this life, as Abram did. How this lifts us out of the racking uncertainties and agonizing strain of life that we see in those who do not know God and His promises and His power! How it rebukes and forbids another instant of worry in our life so long as we live! Notice, too, that this stupendous goal came to Abram—both its assigning and its reaching—late in life. If we are past our youth, that is no reason for any uncertainty or fear as to great things ahead, as yet unknown and unattempted. When God says, Go, we are to start, and we are to *arrive:* let us never forget that.

An old Frenchman, veteran of Napoleon's campaigns, was asked by a stranger what the men thought of Napoleon. His eyes snapped with old-time fire as he cried out: "We *loved* him. We *believed* in him. Napoleon say, 'Go to the moon!' Every man start. Napoleon find the way."

Shall we not have as much faith in our om-

nipotent heavenly Father? "If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 31, 32).

And Abram did not enter alone into the place of promise; those who were dearest to him, and for whom he had special responsibilities, went with him. If God has given me a vision of great blessings, which are so far ahead that they seem impossible of realization, too difficult and too good to be true, let me be sure that, by simple faith and unswerving obedience, *into those blessings I shall come.* And those who are committed to my care, and whom I love most, are to share them with me. May I never hinder God by doubting this!

AND the Canaanite was then in the land . . . and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. And he removed: . . . and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah. Genesis xii. 6 to 9.

The Canaanite stood for the most open and flagrant opposition to Jehovah, in degraded and soul-destroying sin. And in the land of promise, to which God had brought Abram, the Canaanite was present as long as Abram lived. But Jehovah was present also; and at each stopping

place on his journey Abram turned confidently to Him and built altars in His honour. In my land of promise, the kingdom of Jesus Christ now and here on earth, the Canaanite is present —and perhaps will be as long as I live: and I shall be attacked by fierce efforts to drag me into his open revolt against Christ, and the degradation and demoralization of the sin-mastered life. But God is present also; and constant, continuous altar-erecting, in faith and prayer and service, is my only safety. In Christ alone can I do this, and be kept.

SAY, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake. Genesis xii. 10 to 20.

When a person is making, in general, an honest effort to serve the Lord, he always likes to base his wrong-doing on some high plane of moral obligation. Abram, here, did not care anything about his own safety, but he did want to have things go well with him so that he might be enabled to take care of his wife! That was the only reason why he suggested her lying,—so at least he told himself. Whatever the motive was, sincere or insincere, back of it lay a distrust of the ability or willingness of the God of truth to care for them if they simply trusted Him and told the truth. It was probably this same dis-

trust that impelled them, because of famine, to leave the land to which God had brought them. And this pitiable collapse of faith and honour comes just after their splendid, life-risking trust in God and His wonderful care of them! That is the way the Devil tries to strike into any work of God in our lives. The only bright spot in the black incident is God's unwavering care of Abram and Sarai in spite of their cowardly treason. So He has held me, when I have been at my worst. His continuing so to hold me is my only hope; but it is a glorious hope. "I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him" (2 Tim. i. 12).

AND Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had. Genesis xiii. 1, 2.

That is the way God so often treats us after great sin. Abram had forfeited everything. God saved everything for him, added great wealth to him, and brought them all out of danger into safety. That is the way God has usually treated me after my sin. Instead of stripping me of all that I have forfeited, He has safeguarded it, added richly to my blessings, and brought me into a safe place. Some one has said, Who could ever have conceived of such a God except God Himself! Who could ever ex-

ert such love except God Himself! Who could have the faith to believe that sin-poisoned human nature *could* respond to such love, except God Himself! Father, may I respond to-day, by faith, and love, and obedience! And wilt Thou, through Christ Thy Son in me, let this love of Thine shine out through me in my attitude toward all my fellows!

AND he went on his journeys . . . unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning; . . . unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah. Genesis xiii. 3, 4.

When we have wandered away from God, and are conscious of a great break in our fellowship with Him because of our disobedience and faithlessness toward Him, there is only one thing to do: to get back as quickly as we can to the place where we were at the beginning of our best life in God; and there, at the altar of complete and unconditional surrender—the sacrificed life—call on God the Father again and commit everything once more into His keeping in Christ. It has been said that "the way of advance is the way of remembrance"; and for most of us, in most things, it is. What we need is not so much new light and guidance, but a going back to the old familiar light and guidance that we have will-

fully let become obscured or unreal. *Then*, as we live true to the best that we have known of God aforetime, He can and will give us gloriously new revelations of Himself.

AND Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds and tents. Genesis xiii. 5.

It pays to keep in the company of good men. But the pay is highest when we keep in their company for the sake of the highest pay,—something higher than flocks, and herds, and tents: to learn the secret of their fellowship with God. Lot did not seem to want *that* kind of pay, and he did not get it.

THEIR substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. Genesis xiii. 6, 7.

The first recorded result of great wealth was that it separated its owners from each other: the younger man, by it, lost out of his life the best influence that he had ever had; the older man lost the opportunity of keeping by him and under his own influence, as a friend and co-worker, the only one of his own blood and religion in all that new country and pagan land. Wealth did not seem to start its owners well, at the beginning, and it does not seem to have improved much since then.

IF thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left. Genesis xiii. 8, 9.

Abram insisted on choosing first, and it was the kind of "first choice" that we ought always to make: he chose to give the other man first choice. There is not much room for quarrels or misunderstandings when we, in this way, always look out for Number One: by making the other man Number One.

SO Lot . . . moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked. Genesis xiii. 10 to 13.

Lot's taste of wealth had given him the slant that it usually does give: desire for more wealth. So he based his choice simply on self: How can I get more than I have already? Not, How can I show Abram the spirit that he has shown me; nor, How can I do the most good in this choice? No; simply, How can I get most for myself? The fact that the answer pointed in the direction of notorious wickedness did not change his choice; *for nothing changes the choice when we have once begun to make getting the chief purpose of our lives.*

On the other hand, the truth shines out strongly here, in Abram, that wealth, when accepted not as a possession but as a stewardship, need not

demoralize life and character. Abram, of great wealth, was more interested in giving and serving than in getting. So he could, as he did, use his wealth to God's glory. Not *money*, but the *love of money*, is the root of every kind of evil. Abram had money; Lot had the love of money.

But about one man in ten thousand can have much money without yielding to the love of it. If God has not sent us this perilous stewardship unsought, we had better not take the awful risk of seeking it.

AND Jehovah said unto Abram, . . . All the land which thou seest, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed forever. Genesis xiii. 14 to 18.

This promise makes one think of Eph. iii. 20, "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Abram had not asked God for this blessing. It was God's unsought blessing for Abram. The blessings that God sends us unsought are always better than those that we ask Him for. We cannot "ask or think" up to the "exceeding abundantly" of His love. We would not dare to.

The whole story of Abram, so far, has been the story of God's unsolicited leading of him on, step by step, into an undreamed of enrichment of life. And that is the story of what God is

trying to do for me. Shall I let Him, as Abram did?

AND they took Lot, . . . and his goods, and departed. Genesis xiv. 1 to 12.

Lot now begins to pay the price of having chosen what he thought was the best he could get for himself. It was too high a price. No matter what we get when we set out to get all we can for ourselves, the price we pay for it is always too high.

AND when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. Genesis xiv. 13, 14.

Notice that godliness and righteousness are preëminently sensible and practical. This man of God had several hundred trained men, of his own household, brought up under his personal supervision, ready for instant action in any time of need. When the emergency came, he did not sit down and merely pray for deliverance,—though doubtless he prayed; he also sprang into action with the decision and resourcefulness that that man alone can show who has habitually been making ready for any call. *That* is what real godliness does for a man. Lot, the self-seeking dweller in a place of sin, had no such prepared-

ness for trouble; when the blow fell, he had to depend upon his pious uncle.

BLESSED be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. Genesis xiv. 15 to 20.

The first record of a victory in battle by one of God's followers contains the specific statement that God won the victory. So it is always: never a victory in a righteous cause but that it was God, and God only, who won it for us. Only as we forget this are we in danger.

I WILL not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet. Genesis xiv. 21 to 24.

When a man shuts out from his life and purposes, and even from his tolerated desires, the spirit of getting, as we have seen was true of Abram, it will constantly show itself in his life and actions and decisions, to the surprise of others. He will never consent to a gain for himself, if there is a higher and better way. He is *afraid* of mere personal gain, as he sees its effects upon the life and character of people around him. Service interests him much more than possessions.

FEAR not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. Genesis xv. 1.

Surely these thoughts ought to be enough to

carry us through any day of stress, or temptation, or need. God is sufficient to protect us from any sort of impending harm or danger. *And God never asks us to work for Him without pay.* Therein He differs from the Devil, who is so much harder a taskmaster, and who never pays according to his promises. No hardship that God asks us to undergo in His service begins to equal the greatness of the exceeding great reward that follows. I have never been so supremely happy as when I have been honestly and faithfully striving to do God's will to the uttermost. I want, and I can conceive of, no rewards that can approach those I have tasted from time to time, when I let Him send them, in the doing of His will.

AND he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Genesis xv. 2 to 5.

When God sets out to do a thing for us, He does it in a prodigality of love-prompted abundance that fairly staggers one who reckons things by the coldly calculating standards of earth. Again this brings back Eph. iii. 20; it also reminds us of Luke vi. 38 and Mal. iii. 10.

AND he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. Genesis xv. 6.

There is no higher form or evidence of right-

eousness, nothing that rejoices the great loving heart of our heavenly Father more than just trusting Him,—completely, sweepingly, unquestioningly. *That* is the belief that is always reckoned to any one for righteousness. Three times in the New Testament this passage is quoted, it is so significant (Rom. iv. 3; Gal. iii. 6; Jas. ii. 23).

Nothing so rejoices an earthly parent as the unquestioning trust of a child when there is no reason to trust except the child's unwavering, unshakeable confidence in the parent. So it is with God. Such belief is never merely passive. It shows itself in our instant *doing* of anything and everything that God asks, as in Abram's case later (xxii. 1 to 20). But even while it is called upon to do nothing but believe, it has in it all the elements and requirements of righteousness. How simple this makes our religion, if we will but have it so!

I AM Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. Genesis xv. 7.

God never asks us to believe in Him in an unreasoning or unreasonable way. When He asks us to accept His word that He will do for us something that seems at the time wholly impossible, He quietly reminds us of what He has

already done for us, as reason for our continued belief in Him. God's great work for us in the past is the collateral He offers when He asks us to accept His promissory notes for a future payment which He pledges Himself to make. He may make a heavy draft upon our faith, but—"I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees."

The collateral that God has already deposited with each of us, in the wonderful things He has done for us, is more than enough to justify our faith to the uttermost. "I am Jehovah"; that is enough. But in addition to Himself, He has given us His Son in covenant-evidence of His love and purpose for us. Let me accept in glad confidence and eagerness everything He asks me to believe of Him, as promised to me by Him.

WHEREBY shall I know that I shall inherit it? . . . Take me a heifer . . . And the birds of prey came down, . . . and Abram drove them away. Genesis xv. 8 to 11.

When God promises us a great blessing, and we ask how we may know that we shall have it, the answer is always the same: *By your own sacrifice to Me.* God cannot fulfill His richest blessings to any of us until we have offered up to Him, in utter completeness of surrender, our-

selves. Then He can do glorious things for and with our lives.

And then, also, "the birds of prey" attack a life as never before. The Devil does not like to see any life really sacrificed to God, for he knows how mightily God will use that life to defeat the works of darkness. So the birds of prey come down. We must expect to be attacked and tempted more fiercely and continuously after our life has been wholly surrendered to God than we ever were before.

But there is a still deeper, better meaning in this pledge of fulfillment that God showed Abram. Every Old Testament sacrifice was a foregleam and type of the Sacrifice which was to fulfill all these for all time: that of our Christ, the Son of God. No man's sacrifice without the life-giving sacrifice of Christ could avail anything. So Christ's sacrifice for us, which is God's offering for us, is our final and irresistible pledge of the fulfillment of God's promises to us.

KNOW of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs; . . . they shall afflict them four hundred years; . . . and afterward shall they come out with great substance. Genesis xv. 12 to 14.

An assured part of God's pledged blessing to us is delay and suffering. A delay in Abram's

own lifetime that seemed to put God's pledge beyond fulfillment was followed by seemingly unendurable delay in the life of Abram's descendants. But it was only delay: they came "out with great substance." The pledge was redeemed.

God is going to test me with delays: that I know. And with the delays will come suffering. But through it all stands God's pledge: His New Covenant with me in Christ, and His inviolable promise of every lesser blessing that I need. The delay and the suffering are part of the promised blessing; let me praise Him for them to-day; and let me wait on the LORD and be of good courage; He will strengthen my heart.

BEHOLD, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram. Genesis xv. 15 to 21.

So God accepted the sacrifice that Abram, at God's direction, was offering Him; but not until God had touched it with His own purifying fire. Then He confirmed and renewed His covenant with Abram.

That is just what I must expect God to do with all that I offer Him, especially with my life itself. It may be offered up in sacrifice to God as com-

pletely and sincerely as I know how, in sacrifice of life and self unto Him, as He has directed; yet it cannot be even acceptable to Him until it has been burned out with the purifying heat of His refining fire. It must not surprise me or disturb me when the fire of suffering and testing begins to burn deep. Let me rather rejoice in it as I recognize in it God's accepting of my wholly unworthy offering, and let me wait in confidence and quietness for His renewing and fulfilling of His pledges to me.

AND Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. Genesis xvi. 1 to 6.

See the taint of Egypt cropping out again! A short cut to the accomplishment of God's plans,—shorter than He intends,—always means a long road of wearisome misery and regret. Abram and Sarai had waited ten years for the child on whom God's promise depended, and it had not come. So they took matters into their own hands, in a way that they knew was not His way.

The tragedy of it is that this record immediately follows the record of Abram's splendid unselfishness (xiv), then his historic and undaunted

faith, and God's sweeping, miraculous assurance and new covenant (xv). After these heights of heaven itself, slump goes everything into the mushy, swampy lowlands of devil-directed distrust: wedlock dishonoured, God dishonoured, Abram weakly a partner to the thing, Sarai mocked, the servant abused and driven away. What an awful price we pay when we try to improve upon God's plain will for us! He says, Let Me bless you beyond all reckoning. We say, I'll attend to the blessing in a better way: and then we eat Dead Sea fruit.

RETURN to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. . . . I will greatly multiply thy seed. . . . Thou art a God that seeth. Genesis xvi. 7 to 16.

Go straight back into the worst hardship you have ever known: that was God's loving message to the discouraged, bewildered fugitive. But God knew that in that way He could best care for her and her unborn child.

His next word was that of the richest blessing that any Oriental man or woman could think of: many descendants. No wonder the heart-broken, hunted woman cried out in thanksgiving, "Thou art a God that seeth."

Dr. Aked has done us all a service in pointing out that this verse (in the A. V., "Thou God

seest me") has been slandered in its misuse for many years. We commonly quote it as meaning that God always has His eye on us—as a detective or policeman; that we cannot get beyond His sight in any wrong thing we do. That is completely wrenching it out of its meaning. Hagar's cry was one of thanksgiving, joy, gratitude. Even out here in the wilderness, where she had not looked unto Him for help in her extremity, His eye in ceaseless, watchful love was upon her, and He would never abandon her. She never could get beyond God's love. Nor can we. Our God is a God of seeing; He sees and meets our need even when He may seem to have forgotten all about us.

I AM God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him. Genesis xvii. 1 to 3.

Here is the whole priceless privilege of fellowship in prayer and life with God, and its results. It is for me exactly as it was with Abram. I am to walk before God to-day, in completeness: I am to live and act conscious of the fact that I am in His presence all the day long; therefore I am to do His will completely,—to the limit of my light, not part way. That is the meaning of

"perfect"; not sinless perfection, for God does not enjoin the impossible. Then God pledges Himself to multiply me spiritually in the lives of others, so that the life of Christ in me may be communicated to and reproduced in others wherever I go.

And God will talk with me, freely and lovingly and revealingly, if I will give Him a real opportunity to do so, by going apart by myself, alone with Him, and literally falling on my face before Him. Do we give God a *chance* to talk with us as He longs to?

MY covenant is with thee. . . . Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham. Genesis xvii. 4 to 8.

All that any one of us can ask or need as we enter upon the day's march, with its dangers and opportunities ahead, is this definite pledge of God's: My covenant is with thee. And we have His covenant in better, richer form than Abram had it,—his New Covenant in Jesus Christ. That New Covenant, which God in Christ pledges Himself to keep with us, includes such agreements as these: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit"; "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you"; "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the

world"; "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

Moreover, our names, like Abram's name, are changed as the result of the covenant. "No longer," says our Lord to us, "do I call you servants; . . . but I have called you friends" (John xv. 15); and, "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17 margin). One's name, which in the East means his innermost personality, is wholly changed; he is born anew. That is the covenant in which God pledges Himself to me to-day.

AND God said unto Abraham, And as for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. . . . As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her. Genesis xvii. 9 to 16.

God never asks us to keep His best blessings to ourselves. They are always of such a sort that we *want* to share them; and we always can share them, and must share them if we are to keep them. God's covenant with Abraham, with all the blessings that it carried of fellowship and the special favour and protection of God, was for Abraham's descendants throughout generations to come.

Moreover, the one dearest to him on earth

was to have her name changed, as his had been, and to share in the blessing. All that Christ means to us, as God's covenant and richest blessing to us, those who are dearest to us can have also. If our name has been changed, if in Christ there has been in us a new creation, so it can be for those dearest to us. We are Christ's key to their lives for Christ. If they do not enter into our richest blessings, the fault and failure are ours. God would have us in no doubt as to this. Love, and faith, and prayer, and patience, and Christ will accomplish it.

AND Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son. Genesis xvii. 17 to 21.

Abraham did not dare to ask God outright for the direct keeping of His promise in the best way that could be thought of, but timidly suggested that He now do the best that human possibilities offered. And God, instead of denying him the blessing that he was forfeiting by his unbelief, holds true to His promise and does the thing that Abraham knew was best but thought impossible.

There are "bests" in our own life and in the lives of those dear to us, which long ago were our ideals, and which we know were and are

God's ideals for us and for them, but which we have given up as no longer possible. And we are weakly and timidly asking God for some second-best blessing instead, as though that were the best He could now do. He wants us to claim now, for ourselves and for others, the best that we have ever dared to think of, and then ask Him confidently to do better than that for us. He will. Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us—that is our authorization.

IN the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. Genesis xvii. 22 to 27.

Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Every time God calls us to any duty, He is offering to make a covenant with us; doing the duty is our part, and He will do His part in special blessing. The only way we can obey is by obeying in the selfsame day, as Abraham did. To be sure, we often postpone a duty and then do it as fully as we can later on. It is better to do this than not to do it at all. But it is then, at the best, only a crippled, disfigured, half-way sort of duty-doing; *and a postponed duty never can bring the full blessing that God intended, and that it would have brought if done at*

the earliest possible moment. It is a pity to rob ourselves, along with robbing God and others, by procrastination. "In the selfsame day" is the Genesis way of saying, "Do it now."

AND Jehovah appeared unto him; . . . and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them. Genesis xviii. 1 to 8.

Every visitor who comes into my life to-day is an appearance of Jehovah unto me. And "visitor" may mean interruption. Any and every interruption in my life, as brought into it by other persons in ways not of my seeking nor of my control, is a visitor sent or permitted of God. Shall I meet these, His appearances, as Abraham did: run to meet them in eagerness for the opportunity that they offer? Not unless I do can I get the blessing which God is trying to send by them.

This is as beautiful a picture of true Oriental hospitality as one is ever likely to find in all literature. There is no reason to suppose Abraham knew that these men were angels or messengers of God,—except that to an Oriental every guest and stranger is such. Abraham simply leaped forward to place himself and all his resources at the service of the strangers whom he at once made his guests. And he

entertained angels unawares. So may we, if we will receive eagerly, as from God, every one who crosses our path in life. The best meal we can offer them is the bread of life. This is a call to daily personal evangelism, as well as to the recognizing of interruptions as God's visits and tests.

IS anything too hard for Jehovah? Genesis xviii. 9 to 15.

Here is God's loving challenge to you and to me to-day. He wants us to think of the deepest, highest, worthiest desire and longing of our hearts, something which perhaps was once our ideal for ourselves or for some one dear to us, yet which has been so long unfulfilled that we have looked upon it as only a lost ideal, that which might have been but now cannot be, and so have given up hope of seeing it realized in this life. *That* thing, if it is in line with what we know to be His expressed will (as a son to Abraham and Sarah was), God intends to do for us, even if we know that it is of such utter impossibility that we only laugh at the absurdity of any one's supposing it could ever now come to pass. *That* thing God intends to do for us, if we will let Him.

"*Is anything too hard for Jehovah?*" Not when we believe in Him enough to go forward

and do His will, and let Him do the impossible for us. Even Abraham and Sarah could have blocked God's plan if they had continued to disbelieve in Him. The only thing too hard for Jehovah is deliberate, continued disbelief in His love and power and our final rejection of His plans for us. If our lost ideal still fails to be realized, it will be not because of our past failure, but because of our continued, deliberate refusal to let God send it to us. Nothing is too hard for Jehovah to do for them that trust Him.

FOR I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah. Genesis xviii. 16 to 19.

That is why God "knows" any of us on earth: to the end that others through us may know Him and keep His way. Is it not His chief reason for keeping me alive to-day? Some day we shall know even as we are known; but until then it is solely God's love and goodness in knowing us that enables us to live and to serve. Let me make sure that I understand this, His purpose in knowing and keeping me, and that I do not let other things, of infinitely less importance, come between me and my commission. Father, may Thy Son, my Saviour and Master,

and Thy Holy Spirit, my Friend and Strengthener, use me to-day as the unobstructing communicator of Thyself to the lives of all whom I meet! May many others, through Thyself working in me, keep Thy way.

I WILL go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me. Genesis xviii. 20, 21.

God is very, very patient, and very, very fair. This entirely human way of describing His thorough investigation of the exact condition of a place before taking any action is simply a suggestion of how long He waits, how patiently He works, how thoroughly He satisfies Himself that all has been done that could be done, before He ever, in any life, lets the full result of sin work out its own end: death. Had He not treated you and me in this same patient, loving way, we should have been blotted out by our own sins long ago. Even now God is waiting, and urging a change in the lives of many who have really given themselves to Christ and taken Him as their Saviour, but who are holding on to sins that are deadly—sins of pride or self-will, or others, preventing full surrender and the mastering, never-interrupted, indwelling presence of Christ in their lives. He will not strike down or cut off until we make Him. He waits and

hopes so eagerly. May we not disappoint Him! May we never force Him to realize, as He had to about Sodom and Gomorrah, that His worst fears about us were true!

I HAVE taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes. Genesis xviii. 22 to 33.

God loves a daring prayer. We know it, because Christian history is filled with the evidences of it: of God's eager, lavish answers to the prayers of the George Müllers, the Hudson Taylors, the new-born Korean Church, and the tens of thousands who have dared to stand before Jehovah and challenge Him to a great test of His love and power. We call it a "great" test; He does not; for has any man ever put any strain upon God's omnipotence and all-love?

It has been pointed out that Abraham, and not God, stopped first, in this prayer; and it is so. God gave no evidence of the "anger" that Abraham seemed to fear, nor of exhaustion or impatience. Perhaps Abraham might have gone farther, and with Lot alone—*and God*—have saved Sodom, physically and spiritually. We do not know; but we do know that we can never dare too much in asking God for blessings that are in the line of His will.

AND Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: . . . and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house. Genesis xix. 1 to 3.

A gleam of shining white light cuts through the awful blackness of this Sodom picture. By his own choice, impelled by personal greed, Lot had been living now for years in a place of sin. Yet when these two strangers came, he treated them according to the same high standards of the God-given hospitality that Abraham, with whom he had once lived, had shown them: and he was the only man in Sodom who would do this. Abraham's influence for good endured above all the degrading influences in which Lot lived, and in the end saved Lot and his family. There is the light-gleam. It is evidently there because Abraham walked with God. May I walk with God so faithfully that He can, through me, reach others in this enduring way!

ARISE, . . . lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. But he lingered; and the men laid hold upon his hand; . . . Jehovah being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth. Genesis xix. 12 to 16.

We have never abandoned any sin of our own accord, and we never shall. It is only because God Himself, in Christ His Son, enters forcibly

into our life, and lays hold upon us, and leads us out of sin, that we ever give it up. You and I know how many times we have lingered, when He was entreating us, "Arise, lest thou be consumed in this iniquity."

Notice that the thing in which Lot was in danger of destruction was the iniquity itself; the margin gives, "Or, punishment," but the punishment is only a result or ending of the sin: the sin itself is the thing that destroys and that is most to be feared. Yet we have lingered, and yet God has led us forth, and saved us from the awful destruction in which we were choosing to remain. Let us never forget this. And let us bless His holy name for His merciful insistence upon our salvation, by the gift of Himself in His Son.

ESCAPE for thy life; escape to the mountain. . . . And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: . . . I cannot escape to the mountain; . . . behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) . . . Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar [*that is Little*]. Genesis xix. 17 to 22.

And, therefore, the name of Lot might well have been called Little, also. We do not know much more about Lot; one of the only remain-

ing two incidents of his life that are recorded is one of drunken degradation. The point is, that when God was directing his life in order to save him, and told him what He, God, believed was the best way to act, Lot held back in distrust and suggested an improvement upon God's plan. God said, "This is your way of safety." Lot said, "I think you must be mistaken." God said, "The plain is no place for you; get up into the heights of the mountain." Lot said, "I would rather go to Littleness on the plain." And God let him go. God's choice for Lot was a mountain height; Lot's improvement upon God's choice was a place on a lower level called Little. How often we have chosen Littleness as an improved substitute for the mountain top to which God was calling us! Father, may I take Thy choices for me unquestioningly and eagerly, and live on the height which is my only place of safety!

AND he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. Genesis xix. 23 to 28.

In one of two ways, destruction must always be the end of every sin. Either Christ must destroy the sin in our lives, or the sin must destroy our lives. We may have the first if we will; we must have the second, whether we will

or not, if we do not take the first. And God's ordering that sin persisted in must destroy the sinner, is only another evidence of God's love. It is far more merciful than that the sinner should continue unhindered to go on forever in the awful degradation and misery of sin. But Christ's destruction of sin is God's plan for us. Are we letting Christ do this? Not merely save us hereafter from the penalty of our sins, but save us now from sinning? If we are not saved now, what reason have we to suppose that we shall be hereafter?

GOD remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow. Genesis xix. 29.

Because of the prayers of one man God delivered another. That is what God has delighted to do from that day to this. Not only physical deliverance will He give, because of intercessory prayer, but spiritual deliverance also. Probably more men have been saved in Christ because of the faithful and faith-filled prayers of others, since Christ was on earth, than in any other way. To pray for a friend, patiently, enduringly, in unwavering faith, perhaps for years, and to continue in this prayer until the spiritual deliverance or blessing of that friend, for which we prayed, is completed, is the highest service, privilege and obligation that God gives us. How faithless we

have been to this obligation! What a joy of heaven itself it is to recognize and meet this obligation! Who is even now being "sent out of the midst of the overthrow" because of *your* prayers?

AND Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain; . . . for he feared to dwell in Zoar. Genesis xix. 30.

So that is what Lot's improvement upon God's choice for him amounted to. He said, "Not Thy will; but mine." God gave him what he asked for; and when he got it he found he did not want it. But he could never regain, now, what he had lost in rejecting God's will for him at the time that God wanted him to take it. When God offers us a blessing—which His will for us always is—we cannot turn from it, try our own plans until we find them to be failures, and then go back and get the blessing we declined. We may get a second or third best then, and it will still be better than anything we could devise; but the "first best" of God can be had only by instant obedience to His first call. Father, may I give all Thy plans for me the supremacy in my life to-day.

AND Abraham said . . . But God came. Genesis xx. 1 to 7.

Abraham feared and distrusted God. Then

he lied, and, so far as he could, wrecked and flung from him the whole great covenant that God had made with him for himself and for the redemption of the world: the covenant that was to lead to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind. Everything for time and eternity was lost for Abraham and Sarah, by Abraham's sin. "*But God came.*" By direct, supernatural intervention He stopped the awful onrush of Abraham's sin-chosen destruction, and saved everything. That is the kind of Father our God is.

Notice several facts. This sin occurred in the life of one who had habitually walked with God. It came late in his life, after God's covenant had been renewed and reaffirmed to both husband and wife. It came after Abraham had, by intercessory prayer, saved Lot from Sodom, and God had shown infinite readiness to do anything that Abraham asked. The sin was not a new one, but an old one, and Abraham had miserably failed, and been saved in exactly the same way before (Gen. xii. 10–20). The sin came through lack of faith in God's ability or willingness to do what He had already shown He could and would do. Abraham's only hope was in God's holding on to him.

Let us take all these lessons deep into our hearts. We need them to-day.

AND Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister. . . . And God said, . . . He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live. Genesis xx. 2, 6, 7.

Abraham sinned, the old sin in the old way, only it was a worse sin now because he knew God better than before. And God—instead of casting Abraham off forever as he deserved, or, at the very least, taking from him all his promised privilege and leadership, and saving him only "as by fire"—gives him new, high privilege before a king, as God's own specially appointed representative, and says that he shall pray for this king in order that his, the king's, sin may be forgiven!

Can you imagine Abraham's breaking heart of humiliation, the blinding tears of joy, when he came to himself and saw how God was treating him? We all know about it. We have sinned, deliberately, in black repudiation of all God's love and goodness; and God has only heaped fresh responsibilities, honours, privileges upon us, and shamed us back to Himself by the overwhelming evidence of His purpose to keep on trusting us to the end, however we may distrust Him. That is God's way. Let it be our way toward others who disappoint us. And let us not disappoint God today.

THEN Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, . . . Thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin. . . . And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place. Genesis xx. 8 to 18.

There is never any position or circumstance in life in which a child of God, who is living and walking with and serving God, has any right to say, "The fear of God is not in this place." The moment we say it, and act as though it were so, we sin ourselves and cause others to sin, as Abraham did. The "fear of God" *is* there, in us at least; and it is there also in God's ordering of the lives of those who seem not to know or care anything about Him. The darker the things about us become the more we need to remember this. If we depart a hair's breadth from what we know God wants us to do, things then will indeed be dark: our own sin and the consequences of it in the lives of others make a situation tragically worse than it needed, or ought, to have been. Let me see to it that the "fear of God" is masterfully in *me* all the day long: then it shall be in every situation into which He may bring me.

AND Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did unto Sarah as he had spoken . . . at the set time of which God had spoken. Genesis xxi. 1 to 7.

Twenty-five years before, God had made His first recorded promise to Abraham concerning this event. At the time set by *God*, not by Abraham, it came to pass. Because Abraham and Sarah in their own minds had set the time very much earlier and had been disappointed, they had given up hope long before this. But God, in His own good time, not a day earlier, fulfilled His promise. Have you waited patiently, in unshaken, unswerving trust, for twenty-five years, for that cherished hope of yours which you believed to be God's will for you or for some one else? Or have you, after a year or two of waiting, perhaps even five or ten years of waiting, grown discouraged and hopeless? *Your* "set time" may be longer than Abraham's—thirty, forty, or fifty years. But God's word cannot fail. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

AND Abraham . . . sent her away. . . . And the water in the bottle was spent. . . . And God heard. . . . And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. Genesis xxi. 8 to 21.

It does not say that God miraculously created a well of water to save Hagar's life and her boy's, but only that "God opened her eyes" that she should see what had been there all the time. Our

life is always lived in the midst of God's special provisions for our particular needs. When it seems to us that the time has come, through the cruelty or thoughtlessness or sin of others, when all is over for us, and our situation is beyond hope, then God opens our eyes: and behold, "a well of water." Dr. Horton has said that the resources of the Christian life are just Jesus Christ. When all hope seems to have died, He is right here; and when our eyes have been opened, we may see, and take, if we will, of this well of water springing up into eternal life.

Read the story of that other woman of long ago, who thought her life was abandoned and lost because the water in her bottle was spent; but whose eyes were opened to see a well of water the like of which she had not dreamed could ever come into her life (John iv. 4–26, 39–42).

ABIMELECH . . . spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: . . . So they made a covenant at Beer-sheba. . . . And Abraham . . . called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God. Genesis xxi. 22 to 34.

Has God the mastery of your life so completely, that those persons around you who do not honour Him, nevertheless see that your life is radically different from theirs, and is so desir-

able and attractive that they want to keep close to you and "on your right side"? This will inevitably be so when you have died unto self so completely that it is only Christ that liveth in you. And when you have this rejoicing, uplifting experience of Abraham's, you will just have to turn to God again, the Everlasting God, as he did at Beer-sheba, and give God all the glory. If you are *not* having this experience, what is the reason? My Christ, if Thou be lifted up in my life, Thou wilt, in me, draw others unto Thee. Oh, wilt Thou enter and master me now so that Thou mayest do this Thy work through me,—yet not for my honour, but for Thine.

GOD did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. . . . And Abraham said, God will provide. Genesis xxii. 1 to 8.

Between this record in Genesis and the Gospel records of Jesus' offering of Himself on Calvary, there is no passage in all the Bible, and certainly none in outside history and literature, which gives such a picture of quiet, peace-filled trust in God amid the awful stress of heart-breaking agony. Nothing can be added; little need be said of it. Read the eight verses over and over; then these words, quoted here, which sum up the whole thing. God is love, always love, and only love.

When, because of His love, He would prove me, am I ready to say, "Here am I"? When the proving reaches the limit of heart endurance, and then goes beyond, and the heart breaks under it, shall I say, in quietness and peace, "God will provide"? If in Christ I will so trust my Father, how richly will He honour and bless the trust that survives the test that breaks the heart!

AND they came to the place which God had told him of. Genesis xxii. 9.

It was the place of sacrifice: the costliest sacrifice that ever man could be asked to make, and compared with which the mere losing of his own life would have been a trifle. In offering up Isaac, Abraham had to lay down his own will, himself, his spirit, in absolute self-death before God. But God had told him of it, and he was ready. God has told us of it in our own lives; just such absolute death of self is going to be called for in us, some time, by a situation in our life which we may not yet have come to. But God has told us of it; Christ makes it eternally plain in calling us into His Way of Life, which is the Way of the Cross, the sign of death. Indeed, many a temptation assails us in which any asserting of self means wreck: only self-death in Christ can make victory possible: it is the place which God has told us of. And

there may come great crisis-times, if they have not already come, when self-death is the only way of salvation. Let us not be found unprepared: it is the place which God has told us of.

AND Abraham built the altar there, . . . and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of Jehovah called unto him, . . . Lay not thy hand upon the lad. Genesis xxii. 9 to 12.

Our hardest sacrifices are never so hard as we thought they were going to be, *if* we go on with them to the very uttermost that God asks. A sacrifice of self to God's will made half-way, or even nine-tenths, is a grinding, cruel experience. When it is made the *whole* way, with the altar built, and self in one's dearest hope laid upon the altar, God always comes with an unexpected blessing that so overwhelms us with love and joy that the hardship of the sacrifice sinks out of sight. "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld." Can He say that to us to-day? No one ever knows the full joy of hearing this word from God until the altar has been built, and the knife is laid to the sacrifice.

IN the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided. Genesis xxii. 13, 14.

That is the mount upon which God wants us to live to-day, and every day. We talk a good

deal about the mountain tops and the valleys of our lives, and the ups and downs, as though it were necessary for us to shift from one to the other in our relations with God. It is not. Only sin can lead us away from the mount in which Jehovah will gloriously provide. And sin is never necessary. The way to this mount of God's supernatural provision is self-death, as it was with Abraham: taking up the cross—the sign of death—*daily*, and following Him whose self-death gave us life. The mount itself was the place of sacrifice. But when we live there, in continued sacrifice, we have a companionship with God and a wealth of provision which nothing can take away. May every day be my mount of Jehovah's providing!

BECAUSE thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, . . . I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens; . . . because thou hast obeyed my voice. Genesis xxii. 15 to 24.

And from that day to this men have been learning that when, at God's voice, they surrender up to Him the one thing above all else that was dearest to their very heart's blood, *that* same thing is returned to them by Him a thousand times over.

Abraham gives up his one and only son, at

God's call, and with this disappear all his hopes for the boy's life and manhood, and for a noble family bearing his name. But the boy is restored, the family becomes as the stars and sands in number, and out of it, in the fullness of time, appears Jesus Christ. That is just the way God meets every real sacrifice of every child of His. We surrender all and accept poverty: He sends wealth. We renounce a rich field of service: He sends us a richer one than we had dared to dream of. We give up all our cherished hopes and die unto self: He sends the life more abundant, and tingling joy. And the crown of it all is our Jesus Christ. For we can never know the fullness of the life that is Christ until we have made Abraham's supreme sacrifice.

The earthly founder of the family of Christ must commence by losing himself and his only son, just as the heavenly Founder of that family did. We cannot be members of that family, with the full privileges and joys of membership, upon any other basis.

THOU art a prince of God among us. Genesis xxiii.

In this quaintly told, thoroughly Oriental picture of the bargain made between two men, with its exquisite touches of pathos, its delicate humour, and its wonderful literary simplicity

and power, the one word that stands out high above all the rest is the people's characterization of Abraham: "Thou art a prince of God among us." And that is just what God is calling you and me to be to-day among our fellows. Not that we should ever be able to go about with any consciousness of having attained to this: that would effectually destroy it. But it is His will that we should let His Son our Christ so master, occupy, possess, and use us that we shall all be, in glorious literalness and reality, princes of God among men. What is there in me that I am opposing to Him in this? Christ, purge it out of my life now, that Thou mayest show Thyself, in all my life, to others.

JEHOVAH, the God of heaven, . . . he will send his angel before thee. Genesis xxiv. 1 to 9.

There is the quiet but infinitely sufficient assurance that we have concerning the outcome of anything we undertake which is in accordance with God's will. For then it is not we that are undertaking it; it is God. He has planned it, He is doing it, He has sent His angel on ahead to prepare for it in supernatural ways and with irresistible power; and He is simply using us as His instrument for His own doing of His own work. His work cannot fail; therefore we can-

not fail in anything thus undertaken in accordance with His will.

Abraham knew that he was perfectly safe in absolving his servant from the oath in case the plan fell through, for he knew that God's plan would *not* fall through. He must have made this seeming concession simply to ease the servant's mind, and not because he himself was in any doubt. God never commissions us to do anything for Him without at the same time preparing the way, by His own direct action. If He asks us to do something that is to affect the life of another, He is working in that other's life to prepare it for what we are to do. Always He sends His angel on ahead of us. How foolish and wrong of us ever to hold back from any commission of such a God!

O JEHOVAH, . . . show kindness unto my master Abraham. . . . Let the same be she that thou hast appointed. Genesis xxiv. 10 to 14.

May my prayers, to-day and always, be as true and lofty and unselfish and sure of answer as was this of Abraham's trusted servant! He was a man of God; he knew how to pray. It was an intercessory prayer, wholly in behalf of others. And it asked for only one thing: that he should be enabled to see unerringly what God's plan, God's appointment, was. He did not ask God

to do what he, the servant, wanted, but he asked that he might be directed, by a simple and wholly reasonable sign, to the doing of God's will and the fulfilling of God's plan. If this spirit and purpose fill my life, answered prayer will be my habitual experience.

AND it came to pass, before he had done speaking. . . . And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, . . . who hath not forsaken his lovingkindness and his truth. Genesis xxiv. 15 to 27.

Every right prayer is answered before the prayer itself is finished—before we have "done speaking." This is because God has pledged His word to us that whatsoever we ask in Christ's name (that is, in oneness with Christ and His will) and in faith, shall be done. As God's word cannot fail, whenever we meet these simple conditions in prayer the answer to our prayer has been granted and completed in heaven *as we pray*, even though its showing forth on earth may not occur until long afterward. So it is well to close every prayer with praise to God for the answer that He has already granted; He who never forsakes His lovingkindness and His truth. See Daniel ix. 20–23; x. 12.

AND the damsel ran, and told her mother's house. . . . And Laban ran out unto the man. Genesis xxiv. 28 to 49.

Things were moving rapidly just now to fulfill God's plan for Abraham's son; people fairly ran to bring things to pass. There had been times in Abraham's life when things did not move so rapidly, but when the delay seemed so unendurable that Abraham and Sarah gave up all hope. That is the way God varies our life. To-day, things may run, or things may drag, or things may seem to stand still. Even worse, things may seem to move backward. But if we are doing God's will, and only God's will, we may be sure that His unseen messengers are running to meet us and to carry forward unerringly and irresistibly every plan that He has for us. Let us simply hold true to the plan, in quiet trust, as Abraham's servant did.

WHEN Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah. Genesis xxiv. 50 to 60.

It would be well for us all to receive as coming directly from the hand of God everything that comes to us, whether seeming good or ill, which is beyond our own control to determine. This man did not bow down to those who had spoken the words that rejoiced him, but to Jehovah. *God* had sent this blessing; therefore he thanked God. And if to-day there are spoken to me words of a very different sort from seeming bless-

ing, may I have the trust and love and courage to bow myself down unto Jehovah—yes, even in gratitude for what He sees best to send me! So of every pleasant word or gift that comes into my life. May I interpret all my life—excepting only my own sin—in the terms of God's loving provision for my particular needs; and may I grow in the habit of bowing down in praise unto my heavenly Father for all that comes into my life!

AND the servant took Rebekah . . . And she said unto the servant . . . And the servant said . . . And the servant told Isaac. Genesis xxiv. 61 to 67.

Nothing but an unnamed servant, even after the blessed and happy conclusion of this romance and marriage, in the bringing to pass of which he had been the all-important human instrument. Just "the servant this," and "the servant that"; never of enough consequence to give his name. Even when he had introduced himself to the new family, it was simply, "I am Abraham's servant." And he was the one man in all the earth upon whose tact and judgment God was depending to select a wife and mother to be second in the line of the family of Jesus Christ. Perhaps nowhere in the Bible, except in Christ Himself, shall we find a more perfect example of selfless service

joined with remarkable human endowments and complete consecration than in this man who comes down through all history as only an unnamed servant. Am *I* willing to be thus unknown and unnamed in the biggest and best things that God may ever use me for? He can never use me as He would, until I am.

Master, Servant of all and Lord of all, crucify with Thyself into eternal death this self of mine that clamours for "recognition" and "honour" that I may rejoice most in the nameless, unknown service that lifts into honour and recognition only Thyself and Thy Name.

AND Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. . . . And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son. Genesis xxv. 1 to 11.

And now Abraham's fate and record and reputation as a father were in Isaac's hands. Upon Isaac's life depended history's verdict upon Abraham's worth or worthlessness as a father. And on our lives depends the public's verdict upon our parents. "Our duty to make the past a success," it has been called. Every sin of mine, whether I like to have it so or not, is a reflection on my parents' training. Every evidence of Christ in my life adds to their honour as parents. They have given all that they had unto me. For

their sakes, God is blessing me. For their sakes, let me so receive and use His blessings that He in my life may add honour to them.

NOW these are the generations of Ishmael: . . . he abode over against all his brethren. Genesis xxv. 12 to 18.

Not only in the place of his living, but in his relationships, was Ishmael "over against all his brethren"; and this was the direct result of the sin of his father in distrusting God and trying to improve upon God's plans. We cannot fathom the mystery of how our sin actually passes on in injury into the lives of others who are not responsible for it; but we must accept God's word for it that it does. And every sin I commit puts me "over against" my brethren, as it puts me "over against" my Father, God; while my every victory over sin enables me to draw nearer to my brethren, and enables Christ—who alone wins every such victory for me—to give of Himself through me to my brethren. These are the choices and results that confront me to-day.

BEHOLD, I am about to die. . . . So Esau despised his birthright. Genesis xxv. 19 to 34.

If my "birthright" in Jesus Christ is not worth holding on to, even at the cost of losing my life for it, what does it really amount to? The Christian's

"birthright"—the right which comes to every one upon his new birth in Christ—is "Christ in you": it is the right to let Christ live out His life in you, do His will and His work in you and through you every hour of your life. That is our best and dearest right, our "birthright." Sometimes it may seem as though we must part with life itself if we hold on to this. Well, what if we must? Which is worth more to us: Christ, or mere human life? Shall we despise our "birthright"?

AND there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. . . . Go not down into Egypt: . . . and I will be with thee, and will bless thee. Genesis xxvi. 1 to 5.

The difficulties and perils and crises that came to my father will come to me; his having met them cannot keep me from having to meet them. And, while his every act of righteousness is an asset of mine, I receive its full value only if I, independently and of my own will, meet my difficulties in faith and obedience. Moreover, God wants all of us to do better than our parents did, no matter how well they did. Abraham's record was a fine one; but God wanted Isaac's to be finer. Abraham sinned by going into Egypt; God warned Isaac against that very sin.

Our father's religion and our father's record will not carry us through; we must have our own; and the better his was, the greater is our obligation to do better still.

AND he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, My wife. . . . And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death. Genesis xxvi. 6 to 11.

That is the way we repay God for His love, and that is the way God repays us for our sin. We sin against His love and He but loves the more against our sin. Isaac was afraid of the imaginary peril of telling the truth, and, in deliberate sin and ungrateful, traitorous distrust of the God who had just pledged Himself in overwhelming assurance, he preferred the real peril of telling a lie. No matter what the seeming, or even the assured, disaster of truth-telling may be, it is never so bad as the hell-born, devil-directed sin of telling a lie. And the fact that Isaac lied was a worse disaster to him than any evil results of his lying could have been; and even God's goodness in averting all evil results could not undo the disaster of the lie itself. But God's care and love did not waver even under Isaac's unworthiness; and that is our richest blessing as it is our only hope. But let us

to-day work *with* God's love rather than against it.

AND they said, We saw plainly that Jehovah was with thee. Genesis xxvi. 12 to 33.

Nothing that can ever be said of us will be better than that. The evidence of Jehovah's presence, however it may have seemed to those Philistines, showed not so much in Isaac's great earthly possessions as in his behaviour under the most aggravated injustice. There are not many pictures, in the Bible or elsewhere, that equal this one in giving us a vivid glimpse of practical, manly righteousness. Isaac was a man of peace; not because he was afraid to fight, but because he had nothing to fight for but his own rights and interests, and that he would not do. So God blessed him, and reasserted His covenant with him; and his ungodly neighbours, even his enemies, seeing that God was with him, wanted to get close to him and be on his right side. May I pay the price that Isaac paid for this, even the death of self! And may men, seeing that God is with me, come close to me that God through me may reach them!

AND Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born. . . . So he blessed him. Genesis xxvi. 34 to xxvii. 29.

It is a pitiable story of dishonour, with a trail of misery and suffering, bitterness and hatred, that ran on and on for years afterward. No man ever lied himself, or any one else, into a blessing. The whole incident meant simply a curse upon Jacob and Rebekah, in which Isaac and Esau suffered also.

And so it is with every hair's breadth departure from the truth. Few of us are likely to lie openly and deliberately as did Jacob. But how many of us are prayerfully watchful against exaggeration, against giving as fact what is only hearsay, against saying we know when we only think we know: scrupulously careful that only truth shall ever pass our lips? "Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth."

HE cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry. . . . He took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. Genesis xxvii. 30 to 36.

There was just about as much truth in that lament of Esau's as there is in a man's cry today that some one else has ruined his life. It was not true then, and it is not true now. No man's real "birthright" or "blessing" has ever been taken from him by another. Esau voluntarily gave up his "birthright" in a fit of cowardly, selfish fear. The "blessing," that

Jacob thought he had secured, brought him and his mother only a long trail of misery. Esau lost his "blessing" not by what Jacob had done, but by the attitude of murderous hatred that Esau now took toward Jacob. Esau still had wide open to him the possibility of playing the part of a *man*, in unselfish love and Godlikeness. That is enough of a "blessing" for any one, and no one but himself can rob him of that "blessing" and "birthright." May I remember the next time I seem to be wronged in any way that *I* am the only one who can wrong or rob or injure or defraud me!

HAST thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. Genesis xxvii. 37 to 40.

No one need ever cry out to the heavenly Father in Esau's bitter hopelessness or uncertainty. No one can deceive my Father and get Him to bestow elsewhere the blessing that He intended for me. Even if, by disobedience, I have robbed myself of the blessing that He intended, I need never fear, for He has ten thousand times ten thousand blessings, and they may be mine for the taking. After I have put from me, either in willful or in unconscious sin, the first, and therefore the best, blessing He had for me, there is another blessing awaiting me which I may still

have the instant I turn to Him again in penitence and obedience; and so His third, or fourth, or one hundredth best blessing, if in sin I have rejected all His earlier blessings, is still offered to me, and is infinitely richer and better than any good I can ever know without Him. What a Father we have!

AND Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him. Genesis xxvii. 41.

And thereby Esau robbed himself of more than Jacob had ever robbed him of, or ever could rob him of. This business of hating a fellow man because he has a blessing that we think ought to be ours is awfully unworthy—and awfully common. We do not call it "hating" today, nor does it often work out in the vulgar sort of murder that Esau planned and hoped for. But how often we let ourselves feel bitterly toward some one who is getting recognition or honour or praise that we want and that we think we ought to have! In church work, in the business office or shop, in home or college—the Esau taint is something that we all know about. It is poison of the most demoralizing and deadly sort. It eats into our vitals, clouds our vision, unsteadies our judgment, embitters our whole outlook on life, and destroys our usefulness. The

instant we find ourselves beginning to have this feeling toward any one, let us turn in conscious helplessness to the God of love, and ask Him in Christ to work in us the instant miracle of changing our feelings as we ourselves are powerless to do. Then let us rejoice in the blessing wherewith our Father has blessed our friend.

BEHOLD, thy brother Esau, . . . purposing to kill thee. . . . Flee thou to Laban, . . . and tarry with him a few days. Genesis xxvii. 42 to 45.

The one who had proposed and insisted upon the sin now makes light of the results of the sin that are already commencing to appear. When Jacob had first protested, his mother had answered reassuringly, "Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice" (xxvii. 13). For sin and its results hate to be recognized at their true value. That true value is so terrific that we *must* discount it in order to sin with any comfort at all. The "few days" that Jacob "tarried" away from home became some forty years. His mother never saw him again in this world. She was bereaved of both her sons in one day; and she had the satisfaction of knowing that it was by her own choice and of her own sin: the curse that she lightly assumed was allowed her in full measure. And she made both her sons to

sin, in a way that took forty years to wipe out. Sin is always miserable and ghastly in itself and in its consequences. The more trifling it seems, the more dangerous it is by that very fact.

GOD Almighty bless thee, . . . that thou mayest be a company of peoples; . . . that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings. Genesis xxvii. 46 to xxviii. 4.

This constant prayer for fruitfulness and for possession of the land comes to us as a foregleam of the challenge that our Gospel gives us: that we may let Christ use us to multiply in others the life in Him that He has given us; and that the land where we live may thus be inherited and possessed by those who are living the life that is Christ. The multiplication of our eternal life by our sharing it with others—is it not the chief reason for our continuing to live on earth? Christ wants each one of us to become a company of peoples. It is simply faithfulness to the Great Commission that He asks. Am I faithful?

NOW Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, . . . saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; . . . and Esau . . . took . . . Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael . . . to be his wife. Genesis xxviii. 5 to 9.

We cannot make a wrong right by plastering

a right over it. Esau had no real desire to do right; he was merely after his father's favour and blessing. When we go after the right in any such spirit, we are not even capable of knowing what *is* right: as Esau blunderingly mistook a daughter of Ishmael for one of the pure family blood, overlooking the taint of Egypt and of sin in that life. If my chief motive to-day in doing any right thing is to get something temporal for myself, or to escape the penalty of some sin, I shall fail in both as miserably as Esau did. My Saviour and Master, wilt Thou purge and cleanse my motives and very desires until they become no less than Thy own—to do the will of my Father! May I never forget that my only escape from my own sins is to see them in their naked blackness as Thou seest them, and to turn in revolt from them, asking Thee to bear them for me and remove them from me forever!

BEHOLD, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Genesis xxviii. 10 to 12.

So heaven and earth are connected, and there is free intercourse between them for the messengers of God. That must have been the first impression made upon the wanderer that night as he watched in this dream that was to teach him

so much. There was nothing in Jacob's dream that is not true. Heaven and earth *are* connected, and God's messengers pass freely between them. And God asks me to be one of His messengers to-day, and to pass as freely back and forth between heaven and earth as those angels did. Just in so far as I become completely His messenger, with the bearing of His message and the doing of His will my whole life, shall I know the joy and freedom of this heaven and earth intercourse: living and working on earth, but dwelling all the time, and consciously so, in the kingdom of heaven, and finding the kingdom of heaven within me. Christ is the secret of all this. He has bridged the gulf for me.

AND, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, . . . In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Genesis xxviii. 13, 14.

Back of every blessing stands God. Because of His love and His will, the sin-caused gulf between heaven and me has been bridged by His Son. And every word that God speaks to me is in blessing. If He speaks in warning or in punishment or in affliction it is a blessing; but oftenest His word to me is, as it was here to Jacob, a showering of unexpected good things into my

life at a time when I have been particularly undeserving. I go back on Him, as Jacob had done, in unworthiness and failure; and He heaps fresh privileges and responsibilities upon me, saying that He wants many others to be blessed through me! That is how He saves us all: by showing confidence in me after I have betrayed His confidence, by continuing to use me after I have insisted upon proving my uselessness. How can we escape the love of such a heavenly Father! Why should I ever wound that love again?

AND, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. Genesis xxviii. 15.

There are days when this assurance of our heavenly Father is the most precious word that could come to us. It came to me on such a day; oh, how I needed it just then! When we realize that we have forfeited His presence, that we have proved our utter impotence to "hold out," that our hopes of achievement and victory in His service are tottering about our heads, and everything looks black—then comes God's word to us in this message of quiet promise that He made to the homeless fugitive Jacob. It is not a ques-

tion of what *I* deserve or have forfeited; it is not a question of *my* ability to hold out; *my* achievement and victory are, of course, utterly beyond me and impossible to me. But all that need not trouble me. For, *in Christ*, God is still with me; He will keep me (not I Him, but He me) *wherever* I go; He will bring me back again into His Land of Promise; and He will never leave me until He has brought to realization every highest hope that He has ever given me. That is *God's* word to *me*. Lord Jesus, my Christ, it is enough. Forgive my unfaith.

SURELY Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. . . . This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. Genesis xxviii. 16, 17.

There ought never to be a moment of my waking hours when I should have to make Jacob's confession as to God's presence: "I knew it not." We have God's presence in a richer way than Jacob ever knew it; for Christ is with us always, even unto the end of the world.

And not only with us, but *within* us. When a man passes from the half-way knowledge of God that takes the many passages in the New Testament concerning "Christ in you" as figurative, and awakens to the glorious fact that this

truth is not a figure of speech, but a literal, actual reality, he begins—if he will meet the other conditions—to live "the life that is Christ"; and never after that is he likely to say of God's literal presence, "I knew it not." Life then is habitually and perennially transformed for him. Always Jehovah is in this place. Everywhere this is none other than the house of God. And Christ in us makes of our very lives the gate of heaven for all those into whose lives we come.

IF God will . . . then . . . I will.
Genesis xxviii. 18 to 22.

Poor Jacob! Setting up, along with his Beth-el stone, a set of conditions for God to measure up to, and then solemnly assuring God that if He will do His part faithfully, he, Jacob, will do his part, and the stone shall become a real memorial of God! God asks us for bread, and we give Him a stone. He asks us for the bread of our whole life, our entire living being, and we offer Him the stone of some little concession, like a tenth of our income, while we keep nine-tenths for ourselves!

To be sure, this sort of close bargaining, shrewd-eyed, sharply conditional, and distrustful of God until He had proved whether He could and would "make good," was, to be sure, all that could be expected of the poor, sin-stained, lying supplanter

at this stage of his life. He had so much to learn yet of God; and it was a move in the right direction, though very faltering and unworthy. And God met him more than half-way. But we, in our enlightenment and in the love of Christ, never need sink to the humiliatingly low level of Jacob in bargaining with God. We know a better way: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom [of God], and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." What a joy and privilege that we can throw ourselves unconditionally upon God in Christ, and find in every stone in our life the house of God!

THEN Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the children of the east. And he . . . rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. Genesis xxix. 1 to 12.

In spite of Jacob's shameful past, in spite of his petty spirit in yet seeing so little of God's real nature and dealings with him, God brings Jacob safely on his long and perilous way and leads him straight to his goal.

And then Jacob is privileged at once to render a little service of courtesy and love. That is the way God treats us. He brings us day after day to a goal or journey's end that we ill deserve, and continually lets us render bits of wayside

kindness to others. That is the way He safeguards and enriches our lives—lives that would be so empty and valueless unless He filled them with Himself, in loving, patient disregard of our repeated failures.

AND Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. Genesis xxix. 13 to 20.

To love is to have such an interest in life that there is no room for any discontent or *ennui*. But most of us have yet to learn how to love those who are really dearest to us, in the way in which God loves and would have us love. This love is so much deeper and surer and steadier and more interesting than merely the emotion of love, or a strong feeling of liking; and it is wholly within the power and direction of the God-given will. Such love just steadily lives and spends itself for the interests of the one loved; it sees the best in that one all the time, refusing to notice or be disturbed by the shortcomings or failures. It is sunshine, and strength, and sympathy to the one loved, ceaselessly; and, when its own feelings are hurt, or ignored, or cruelly trampled upon, never by word or look is this fact recognized or made known. It is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; it beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, en-

dureth all things. There is a zest in life when I let Christ in me show Himself radiantly through me in this His kind of love. And life is empty and wearisome when I do not. My Master, may I yield ever greater obedience to the call of Thy love outgoing from me toward others!

FULFILL the week of this one, and we will give thee the other also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. Genesis xxix. 21 to 30.

Jacob loved Rachel, and had proved it by seven years of service; and his reward was injustice and the opportunity of putting in seven years' more service. It was a high tribute God paid to this love of Jacob's, in that He let it be tested so severely; and the love stood the test. If any test can be put upon you before which your love does not hold out, then it is not love at all. Injustice is one of the commonest, simplest, and most assured tests of our love. It is really a reward of love: an invitation to love to show itself to be pure gold. And love is the one weapon against which injustice cannot forever hold out. Let me remember, then, these two truths: if love is really the master of my life, I am assured of its being tested by injustice, and I should rejoice in the test; and I

can always defeat injustice by more love—a second seven years upon the first. Love is assured of injustice. Injustice is assured by defeat of love.

REUBEN [*a son*]; . . . *Simeon* [*heard*]; . . . *Levi* [*joined*]; . . . *Judah* [*praise*]. Genesis xxix. 31 to 35.

The marginal notes, together with the text, explain why Leah named her sons as she did. Each was received by her as a token that God's love was going to grant her her heart's desire. The blessing has come, she has been heard, her husband has been joined to her in the longed-for love, praise be to God: these are her expressions of faith and confidence before the blessing itself had come to pass. We are not told just what the outcome was as to her loved one's love. The main thing was Leah's trust and confidence in God in the face of a heart-breaking sorrow. Is it not one of the most beautiful records of such trust in the whole Bible?

And it is just that sort of undaunted, invincible faith—a faith that is knowledge—which God asks us to give Him to-day, as we pray in Christ for anything that we have reason to believe is in accordance with His will. He can best answer those prayers in which we praise Him for the answer long before the answer appears—yes, be-

fore we have even risen from our knees as we pray. "See; heard; praise!" should be oftener in our prayers.

RACHEL envied. . . . Jacob's anger was kindled. Genesis xxx. 1 to 8.

It is well to look sin full in the face, sometimes, and to see it just as it is, at its worst. Even then we can never see it in as black an aspect as it appears to God, whom it cost the sacrifice of His only Son our Christ. This brief record is all of sin and its ongoing effects. It started with the sin of selfishness and envy in Rachel. Her whining cry in verse 1 is all and only selfish. If she had been living all and only for her husband and her sister, in selfless love and in complete trust in God, she never would have said those words.

Then comes Jacob's sin—of anger instead of the love that ought to have saved his wife and himself at that crisis. Because Rachel selfishly sinned was no reason for Jacob to sin. Because some one is unjust to me is no reason for me to be angry.

And finally comes the sin of dishonoured marriage because of selfishness, anger, and distrust of God: the story of Sarai, Abram and Hagar over again. That is the way sin unchecked piles up its ugly, loathsome, death-

dealing work. And it starts with any trifle, like a feeling of envy. Jesus, Saviour, may I hate and fear sin as Thou dost hate and fear it for me! And when I have sinned, may I always commit it instantly to Thee, in repentance, that Thou mayest blot it out and stop its awful outworking!

AND God remembered Rachel. . . . And she . . . bare a son: . . . and she called his name Joseph. Genesis xxx. 9 to 24.

So now all the envying, and discouragement, and bitterness, and wrangling in the home, and other sin, were seen to be worse than useless. In His own good time God sent the blessing that He had intended from the start. How cheap and petty and uncalled for Rachel's rebellion and distrust look now! Oh, how we all need to learn to trust and to wait! That blessing that we have longed and prayed for for years has not come yet; but what of that? It is coming, if it is in line with God's will, and if I will let Him send it. My discontent and rebellion and distrust only delay it, unfit me for it, and lessen the joy that God wants to send me in it. Suppose I stop now, forever, opposing my will to His, and just wait on the LORD, and be of good courage, and wait, I say, on the Lord.

TARRY: for I have divined that Jehovah hath blessed me for thy sake. Genesis xxx. 25 to 27.

No richer, deeper blessing can come into any man's life than that these words should be said of him—God hath blessed some one for his sake. And it may be said of you and of me to-day, if we will. It does not call for extraordinary merit, nor for any merit at all in us, save the merit of Christ. It calls simply for our death: the entire crucifixion of self and self's interests, that Christ may live wholly in us and communicate Himself unrestrictedly through us. *He* will see to the blessing of others through us, gloriously and supernaturally, if we will simply get out of the way, as it were, by not obtruding ourselves between Him and those whom He would bless through us. Don't forget Galatians ii. 20.

SO the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. . . . And Jehovah said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers; . . . I will be with thee. Genesis xxx. 28 to xxxi. 3.

After a record of shameful dishonesty and swollen selfishness that deserves and gets only our contempt, and that dishonoured God and his fathers, Jacob is met by this word from God: "I will be with thee." When he deserved only to be repudiated and cast off forever by God,

God suggests his leaving his present surroundings and getting back into the homeland, and reassuringly promises His presence and blessing! Is *that* the way Jacob ought to have been treated? Well, that is the way God has always treated us when we have gone down into the depths of treason to Him and His teachings; and why should not Jacob have had as much of a chance as we? The fact is, Jacob, like ourselves, was so far gone that nothing but God's closest presence and richest blessings could save him. And how many, many times that has been true of us! God has blessed us so richly, not because we were so deserving, but because we were so wretchedly, miserably hopeless that nothing else could save us. "Come back home," He says, "and I will be with you." What a heavenly Father we have!

YE know that with all my power I have served your father. . . . I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst a pillar, where thou vowedst a vow unto me. Genesis xxxi. 4 to 21.

Here is what seems very much like a straight lie from Jacob, talking about having wholeheartedly served Laban when he had tricked him so successfully; and alongside of the lie the record of God's presence with him! It seems like a puzzling, inexplicable life story, does it

not? Well, it is; and almost as much so as yours and mine. In the midst of our unworthiness, our dishonours and dishonesties that are worse than any of Jacob's in view of our infinitely greater light, is God, standing by us, appearing to us, calling and directing our lives, and leading us out of the destruction and death that we busily plan for ourselves, into the Promised Land that we so continuously work against. When we would see ourselves as we are and God as He is, let us remember the strange, tangled story of Jacob.

AND God came to Laban the Syrian . . . and said. . . . Genesis xxxi. 22 to 32.

It is not a pleasant story, this of the rupture and distrust and recrimination between these two men, father and son, who had entered into such a close and loving relationship twenty years before, and who were now alienated permanently from each other by the continued, long-drawn-out sin of each. There is just a single bright spot in the picture at this stage, and it is that God came and spoke—even to the one who knew Him least.

And that is the brightness of our life in the midst of our deepest unworthinesses. Always God keeps coming and speaking to us. We hear Him, though we often close our ears to Him. Every impulse to do better, every protest

within us against doing the unworthy thing that we contemplate, is God's personal presence and spoken word just as plainly as were His Old Testament visitations. Father, give me an infinitely greater sensitiveness to Thy presence and Thy word through instant and habitual obedience to all that Thou sayest!

EXCEPT the God of my father . . . had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. Genesis xxxi. 33 to 42.

Though Jacob was speaking in a burst of self-righteous and unjustified indignation, he nevertheless spoke a truth that we need to remember every day of our lives. It is because, and only because, God is with us, that our lives receive anything that is worth while. We cannot go to too great an extreme in recognizing God as the sole cause of everything good that comes to us. A man is in a dangerous way who says, for example, "This, God gave me; but that, I got for myself." If "that" is anything but sin, then God gave it to him. There is nothing of good in our lives except God. How our lives will enrich and deepen as we practice the presence of God!

MIZPAH, . . . God is witness betwixt me and thee. . . . God . . . judge betwixt us. Genesis xxxi. 43 to 55.

The need of all Mizpah-covenants passes when Jesus Christ comes into a life. It is true that "Mizpah" has been made a Christian watch-word, but only by giving it an entirely different sense from that in which Jacob and Laban, mutually distrustful, selfish, unloving and envious, used it. With them it was simply a truce, an agreement to keep the peace and do the right thing. When Christ enters our life, no one need ask us to promise to keep the peace. It is our privilege so to live in Him, and to let Him live in and through us, that others will want us to be near them because of the peace and joy and power that our life brings them.

AND Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him. Genesis xxxii. 1, 2.

And there are angels of God waiting for me to-day, or holding themselves in readiness to meet me, in order to smooth the way, and overcome difficulties, and accompany me, and bring to pass things that I could never do of myself. Jacob was nearing a great crisis of his life: the meeting again of his brother Esau. We are not told what the angels did for Jacob; it is not necessary; they met him, that is enough. God never asks us to enter upon any difficulty alone. His own Son Christ dwells within us; and His appointed messengers, His angels, meet and ac-

company us to work with us. Surely there is nothing for me to fear to-day!

THEN Jacob was greatly afraid. . . . And Jacob said, O God, . . . I am not worthy of the least of all [thy] loving-kindnesses. . . . And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good. Genesis xxxii. 3 to 12.

When we are confronted with disaster from which there seems to be no escape, Jacob's prayer is a good one to remember: to confess our utter unworthiness of anything but the disaster that threatens, especially of all the wonderful loving-kindness with which God has already "crowded and crowned" our life; and then remind ourselves of God's promises to us,—undeserved but nevertheless given and backed by God's word, by God Himself—and *claim* those promises against the immediately threatening future, knowing that the rich past is only an earnest of the richer future. When God's pledged word is the only hope we have, what a hope it is!

FOR with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. Genesis xxxii. 10.

For every one who has made any pretense

whatsoever of really serving God, as Jacob even in his primitive and all too faulty way had done, the backward look over life will show that the "staff" has become "two companies": the meagre start has grown and multiplied and enriched into an abundance that is all of God—not necessarily our bank account, but the other blessings of life that are worth so much more than that. Jacob's staff at the start had been, after all, something better than his walking-stick. It had been Isaac's parting word to him: "God Almighty bless thee . . . that thou mayest be a company of peoples" (xxviii. 3); and it had been God's own word to him at Beth-el: "I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest"; and Jacob had laid hold of this staff when he had made his half-doubting, unworthily selfish, but sincere covenant with God at Beth-el. So the staff had grown into unthought-of fullness. When our Shepherd God asks us to say, "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me," He means it.

I WILL appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept me. Genesis xxxii. 13 to 21.

How the trembling, eager fearfulness of Jacob on meeting the elder brother whom he had so

flagrantly wronged, stands out in contrast with the way in which we are invited to meet the Elder Brother whom we have so flagrantly wronged! Jacob made these costly gifts as a desperate chance against death; our wronged Elder Brother's message, sent to meet us, is: "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." Have we taken Him at His word, and entered unreservedly into the very fullness of the life that is Christ?

AND Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him. . . . And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh. . . . And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Genesis xxxii. 22 to 32.

Professor Willis J. Beecher has pointed out that Jacob's new blessing and change of name came only after he had yielded to God and ceased to resist and struggle against Him. He had now, for the first time, acknowledged Esau as his superior; and he evidently gave up the wrestling-match after he went down in a helpless heap before that fiery touch on his thigh. His "prevailing" was in the fact that he held on after he had yielded and surrendered, and insisted on claiming the blessing that God has for

those who go down in confessed helplessness before Him. Praise God for such times of solitary wrestling, surrender, and blessing! They mark great mountain peak times in our spiritual life, when our very name and being is changed in Christ. If you are conscious of the lack of some great spiritual blessing is it because you have not wrestled your problem through to the finish of complete surrender and then confidently claimed the blessing of the one who prevails with God by giving up all to God?

AND Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. . . . And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him: and they wept. Genesis xxxiii. 1 to 4.

And so the great, black trouble and catastrophe of his life had arrived! This was what Jacob had been dreading and praying against so desperately. This was what his elaborate plans of strategy, in dividing his company and putting forward those for whom he cared the least, had tried to avert or mitigate. The catastrophe had struck. The blow had fallen. The storm had broken over him in all its fury. Oh, how we need to take this lesson to heart! How we dread, and dodge, and agonize over God's plans for our enrichment and blessing, just because to

us they seem, in the distance, to be troubles! "*All* things work together for good" to them that love Him.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take.
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings o'er your head."

AND Jacob came in peace. Genesis xxxiii. 5 to 20.

Instead of the war and bloodshed and death that he had feared for his dear ones and himself, this was the result. The whole picture is one of peace, and love, and good will, mutual trust and mutual service. It was the relationship between the two brothers that might have been, and that God wanted, twenty years earlier. But it was none the less blessed when it did come, even though so long delayed. That is the wonderful thing about love; it is open to us always, at any time, to enter fully into its blessings, and peace, and joy. When it is permanently on the throne of our life, the whole life is one of peace. We have cheated ourselves and others of its blessings, have we not? But we can claim all its blessings to-day, and come in peace to the end of the day.

LET us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress. . . . And he built there an altar, . . . because there God was revealed unto him. Genesis xxxv. 1 to 8.

The memory of our Beth-els is the most precious, blessed memory of our lives. God wants us to go back there, and rejoice in the memory of the wonderful way in which, when we were in distress, He revealed Himself unto us. It has been said that "the way of advance is the way of remembrance." Think to-day of the highest mountain peak of experience of God that you have ever known; then praise Him for it, rejoice that you may have it renewed to-day, and know that your normal, every-day life in Christ may now be better and higher than the best Beth-el that your past has ever known. That is the power and will of our God.

AND God appeared unto Jacob again. . . . Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name. Genesis xxxv. 9, 10.

We need God's reminders. God had told Jacob this once; and now He lovingly reminds him of it again. It was the greatest day of Jacob's life when, after that fruitless struggle that culminated his lifelong resistance against God, he finally surrendered his will, claimed God's

blessing, and his name was changed from "Supplanter" to "God striveth." That one day was worth all the rest of his life before it. But it would be worth little now unless his constant memory of it continued to direct and control his life. So God reminds him that he is a new man, with a new name and a new work to do in the world. And God would remind me this morning of that day of highest mountain-peak privilege when I first came to know Him better. My own mere memory will not avail, either, so God Himself speaks to me again. Father, I thank Thee for Thy fresh gifts of the best things in my past.

AND God said unto him, I am God Almighty: . . . a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee. Genesis xxxv. 11 to 15.

Never to any other people were such promises made as to the Jews; and never have there been any other such people as the Jews. Set apart as God's own chosen people for a blessing to the whole world, they have continued set apart, a peculiar and chosen people. Found in almost every nation in the world as a distinct part within that nation, they are indeed "a nation and a company of nations." Above all other peoples they challenge and deserve our admiration, gratitude and love. To their great Son, Jesus Christ,

the world owes more than to any man, or to all men, for Son of Man, and more than man, He has saved the world, and is, in irresistibly increasing power and triumph, its Light and Life. And He was a Jew. May I never dishonour and wound Him by any unworthy thought or word or act against His people and the people of God!

SHE called his name Ben-oni [*the son of my sorrow*]: *but his father called him Benjamin* [*the son of the right hand*]. Genesis xxxv. 16 to 21.

The sorrow and suffering that cost Rachel her life became to the one she loved most his right hand of comfort and strength. That is exactly what God would have me do, or let Him do, with every sorrow and suffering that comes into my life. Its purpose is not to break down, but to lift up. If I see in it only an expression of God's love, as it is, every experience of suffering may be turned into a strengthening right hand for others and for myself. I am not above my Master: and He, the Lord Jesus Christ, became through *His* sorrow and suffering unto death the Right Hand of all humanity. Many another, following in His footsteps and in His strength, has, by life laid down, lifted many up. Every one is offered this highest privilege, which was also Christ's.

" He suffered so,—rebuff and wrong
And sickness,—that he cried, ' 'Tis vain
To urge : " Be ever brave and strong ! "
'Tis false to say, " It's worth the strain,
For guardian angels watch o'er men
And always help ! " ' He knew not then
His guardian angel's name was Pain."

AND Isaac . . . died : . . . and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him. Genesis xxxv. 23 to 29.

God was good to these two men to let them come together again as brothers and sons of the same father, and care for him in his final Home-going. There had been a time when the treachery and murderous hatred between them seemed to make such a reunion forever impossible; when Esau, thinking that his father's death was near at hand, had said : " The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob." That was past now; and it was past, not because years had elapsed, but because Jacob had yielded up absolutely to the will of God, and had given his brother first place. " Love never faileth." The will of God is love, for God is love. There is no estrangement or enmity or bitterness in our life that cannot be forever done away with by love—God's love working through us. It makes no difference whether the other one meets us half-way

or not: *we* can go the whole way. But only in the power of Christ, who yielded up all that He had, in His love for us, can we do this.

THE generations of Esau (the same is Edom). Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan: . . . and . . . Ishmael's daughter. Genesis xxxvi. 1 to 43.

Not a very interesting chapter to start the day with, is it? But one fact of absorbing interest stands out: that this is a record of the far-reaching ongoing effects and results of sin. Esau tried to establish a family by taking as wives the daughters of Canaan, idolatrous, who knew not God; and a daughter of Ishmael, the son of Abraham's distrustful, God-doubting marriage with the Egyptian Hagar. The people of Edom were the result; and they come into the history later on as blocking and opposing the chosen people of God, and at warfare with them, just as Esau and Abraham blocked and opposed God in giving rise to the new nation. The ongoing effects of our sin are unthinkable and awful beyond words. That they extend to the third and fourth generation is sober, literal fact, not a figure of speech. But Jesus Christ who is our life can break the power of sin and annihilate it, when we let Him. Better still, He can keep us from

sin—stop a sin before it comes into existence. If I will commit myself and this day to His mastery, it need not be a day like "Esau, the father of the Edomites."

AND Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings. Genesis xxxvii. 1.

That was the land that God had given his father, and his father before him. If we have had fathers to whom God and God's promises were their richest possession, we shall do well to dwell in the land of our fathers' sojournings. We do not need to improve on their experience of God and discover new and better religious territory to live in. Esau moved into new country, in more ways than one: his descendants became the enemies of God's people. Jacob held to the old place and the old ways; his Descendant was Jesus Christ. Our fathers for nineteen centuries have been finding that to sojourn in the fertile land of New Testament Christianity is sufficient for all their needs; we may safely dwell there. The best part of it is, this old home-country of life in Christ is always new. Not one ten-thousandth part of its reach and riches has been explored and discovered yet. But it is all ours, now and forever, if we really sojourn in "the life that is Christ."

NOW Israel loved Joseph. . . . And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. Genesis xxxvii. 2 to 11.

God's giving me lavishly of His best gifts does not carry with it any guarantee against my abusing and doing harm with them. God had chosen Joseph for a marked career, and was helping him to realize this. Joseph took the evidences of the promised blessing, and did the best he could to wreck everything with them. His prompt telling of his dreams to his family seems to have been the height of self-centered folly. It could do no good; it worked out in their great sin, which God mercifully overruled for good to them all. So we all act, sometimes, when God is lavishly blessing us. Father, may I be only humbled by Thy blessings, and yield myself in completer obedience to Thy will! Keep me from using Thy goodness to do ill with, as I have done so many times before.

GO now, see whether it is well with thy brethren, and well with the flock: and bring me word again. . . . And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them. Genesis xxxvii. 12 to 17.

He was sent on a difficult and dangerous journey to look after the welfare of the men who hated him. That would not strike most of us as

being a very desirable, or even necessary, thing to do. Yet it is exactly what we must be willing to do if we have a real desire to let Christ live His life in us. It is what *He* did. He was sent by His Father to earth to see whether it was well with His brethren, God's chosen people the Jews, and with the flock entrusted to their care, which was the whole world that they were to bless. They hated Jesus; but He went after His brethren, and found them; and the mission cost Him His life. Joseph did the same, and his mission virtually cost him his life, so far as his brothers' intention toward him was concerned. But Jesus and Joseph lived to save their brethren; and so shall we, if we are as obedient to God's commission to lay down our life for those who hate us. It is pretty high privilege to walk to-day in the footsteps of Jesus and Joseph.

THEY conspired against him to slay him. . . . We shall see what will become of his dreams. . . . They took him, and cast him into the pit. Genesis xxxvii. 18 to 24.

It was pretty severe treatment for young Joseph—deadly cruelty, with bitter, hateful contempt! Yet God was even then preparing to use him to turn the cruelty and hatred of these brothers, through the alchemy of his virtue and love, into a means of saving their lives and bless-

ing them beyond their richest imagination. That is what God would do, through me, for every one who ever treats me with hatred or injustice. I am not likely to be as badly treated as Joseph was. But I have often made as much fuss over my little ill-treatments as though I had been. God wants to change all this, and to turn every such ill-treatment into a means of rich blessing toward my evil-doers through Christ's mastery over me. *I* cannot do this; but Christ in me can. Shall I not welcome injustice, hereafter, as Christ's special opportunity to show what He can do through me for others?

BEHOLD, a caravan of Ishmaelites. . . . And they brought Joseph into Egypt. Genesis xxxvii. 25 to 28.

The Ishmaelites were descendants of the sin of Abraham, founder of the family of Joseph's brethren. That sin of their father passed by and offered inviting opportunity to fresh sin, which they accepted. Yet to Joseph, who was doing God's will, both the old sin of the Ishmaelites and the new sin of his brothers' sale simply carried him forward into the blessings that God was preparing for him. What a lesson this is to me! My old sins are ready to appear, like haunting ghosts, whenever I yield to sin; and they will work with the new sin to multiply it. But

both old sins and new can be made by God to yield treasures of blessing if I put myself absolutely into His keeping in surrender to His will. Yet only as I turn eternally against all sin, in Christ, can He make stepping-stones of my old sins for me.

IT is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him. . . . And the Midianites sold him into Egypt. Genesis xxxvii. 29 to 36.

The greatest tragedy in the life of Jacob the father and Joseph the son became, under God, one of the greatest blessings of their lives. They could not know this at the time, or see it, or imagine it. Nevertheless, it was so, and it will be so—not may be, but will be—in the case of every black sorrow of our lives that comes to us from others, *if* we live in God's will. The worst results of the sins of others hurled against us cannot alter this eternal rule of God's made in our behalf: "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good." This means that, if we really believe His word and trust Him, we shall praise Him and rejoice while the clouds are blackest about us.

AND Jehovah was with Joseph. . . . Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake. . . . And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand. Genesis xxxix. 1 to 6.

That is the sort of reward God offers me if I will serve Him *to the limit.* And people talk about how much they have to "give up" by going in for the Christian life. The trouble with so many is that they have not the "nerve"—the Bible calls it "faith"—to surrender themselves absolutely to God's will; and so they lose, both the best things He would give them and the things of the world which still look good to them because of their half-way surrender. Complete service of God means the three things that Joseph had: God Himself with us, all His resources ours; other people supernaturally blessed because of our life—that is, we are a channel of God's love into their lives; and the trust and respect of our fellows—everything coming our way, in other words. This is always so, in the long run, even if it seems to be pretty badly broken into for a while, as it was with Joseph.

HIS master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph. . . . Behold, my master . . . hath put all that he hath into my hand: . . . how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? . . . And he . . . fled, and got him out. Genesis xxxix. 7 to 12.

If a man will, on his knees, ask Christ to reveal Himself to him in this story, he will find in it

one of the most glorious revelations of the power and purity of Christ that the Bible offers. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am"; and it must have been He who led Abraham's son, Joseph, in triumph through these onslaughts of hell. Christ can do the same for men and boys, for women and girls, to-day against this sin which, because it is a degrading of the most Godlike powers of humanity, has in it more of hell than any other sin that Satan in the councils of hell ever devised. God, who is love, so loved us that He gave us His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to be our whole life; and with Him He has "freely given us all things." My Master hath put all that He hath into my hand. Shall I traduce Him, wound and crucify Him, by taking this hell that Satan offers me into the life that Christ has trusted with all that He has? No: the victory that Jesus Christ gave to Joseph He gives to you and to me. How the music of the hosts of heaven must have surged up and down the courts of heaven that day when Joseph, the clean-lived young Hebrew of Jesus' own race, gave Christ the mastery of his life, and Satan slunk back into hell cowering and utterly defeated, doomed to the second death which shall some day put an eternal end to Satan's futile and impotent attacks upon Christ and all those who live in Christ.

AND Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison. . . . But Jehovah was with Joseph; . . . and that which he did, Jehovah made it to prosper. Genesis xxxix. 13 to 23.

When God lets us go to prison because we have been serving Him, and goes there with us, prison is about the most blessed place in the world that we could be in. Joseph seems to have known that. He did not sulk and grow discouraged and rebellious because "everything has gone to the dogs, and it doesn't pay to do right, anyway." If he had, the prison-keeper would never have trusted him so. Joseph does not even seem to have pitied himself; let us remember that if self-pity is allowed to set in, that is the end of us—until it is cast out utterly from us. Joseph just turned over everything in joyous trust to God, and so the keeper of the prison turned over everything to Joseph. Lord Jesus, when the prison doors close in on me, keep me trusting, and keep my joy full and abounding. Prosper Thy work through me in prison; even there, make me free indeed.

WHEREFORE look ye so sad to-day? . . . Do not interpretations belong to God? tell it me, I pray you. Genesis xl. 1 to 8.

Joseph made it his personal business to share with God the burdens of those near him, and to

cheer and comfort them if he could. That morning greeting of his was probably radiant with contagious sunshine. It is a good way to begin the day. If we see others depressed or discouraged, let us shine only the more brightly with the love of Christ into their lives, and assure them, if we can, that God is equal to the present need, whatever it may be.

AND Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it. . . . Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him. Genesis xl. 9 to 23.

God assures two things to those who are in Christ: because Christ is "the Truth," we shall in Him find all truth that we need to know. He is the Interpreter and the Interpretation of all our life, of all our problems; and through us He will solve the riddle of others' lives and lead them into "the truth"—which is Himself. And we are also to share Christ's own experience of being forgotten or even injured by the very persons whom we have loved and served. Joseph had that privilege; so shall we. But if we are filled and mastered by the deathless, dynamic love of Jesus Christ, that love working in us and through us toward others will not be even disturbed by their treatment of us.

AND the ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine. . . . And the thin ears swallowed up the seven rank and full ears. Genesis xli. 1 to 8.

There is a warning for us in that dream, just as it stands. It *is* possible for the best years of our life, the best experiences, the best victories won, and the best service rendered, to be swallowed up by times of failure, defeat, dishonour, uselessness in the kingdom. Some men's lives of rare promise and rare achievement have ended so. It is awful to think of; but it is true. Yet it is never necessary.

S. D. Gordon has said that the only assurance of safety against this tragedy is "fresh touch with God," daily, hourly. The blessed, fruitful, victorious experiences of yesterday are not only of no value to me to-day, but they will actually be eaten up or reversed by to-day's failures, *unless* they serve as incentives to still better, richer experiences to-day. "Fresh touch with God," by abiding in Christ, alone will keep the lean kine and the ill-favoured grain out of my life.

I DO remember my faults this day. Genesis xli. 9 to 13.

Because we forget our faults so constantly, God is good to remind us of them by circumstances that force us to face them. Bishop

Oldham has said that there is in the life of every one of us "a vast area of undiscovered sin." In many ways God is ceaselessly, patiently trying to reveal to each of us more and more of this "undiscovered country" of our lives—not for our discouragement, but so that we may turn each freshly revealed or remembered fault over to Jesus Christ and have it forever done away with. Let us rejoice whenever we remember present faults of ours that we were overlooking. But the remembering will leave us worse off than we were before unless we instantly seek the victory and release which are in Christ.

AND they brought him hastily out of the dungeon. . . . And Joseph answered, . . . It is not in me: God will give. Genesis xli. 14 to 16.

That was the reason why Joseph was brought out of the dungeon: because it was his life habit to say, "It is not in me: God will give." The dungeon bars break for any man who learns to say that. It is freedom, release. It is bondage, indeed, for me to suppose that there is in me any good, any knowledge, any power, anything worth while, any capability of meeting the responsibilities that confront me. The light of liberty breaks when I say, and mean it, "It is not in me: God will give." That is the life that is Christ, and it is freer and more satisfying than the life that is self.

AND the food shall be for a store to the land . . . that the land perish not. Genesis xli. 17 to 36.

And so God offers me food that is abundant against the times of sore need in my life, that I perish not. That food is nothing else than the "bread of life," His own Son, Jesus Christ my Lord, my Saviour, and my Life. As I feed upon Christ, and let the Holy Spirit lay up stores of this rich Treasure in my life, I am absolutely safeguarded against the times of peril and leanness that would otherwise be famine and destruction to me. I must draw upon Christ for my life and as my life in exactly the same literalness with which I eat my bodily food. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. . . . He that eateth of this bread shall live forever" (John vi. 53, 58). Lord Jesus, keep me, by the fullness of Thy dear self within me, from those times which Satan would make famine to my soul.

CAN we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is? . . . Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou. Genesis xli. 37 to 45.

When shall we let the simple truth burn into us, and cauterize out everything else, that the measure of our seeming power—for it is not

our power at all—is the measure of our self-crucifying surrender to the will and life of God? Nothing that I am or have is of any tiniest value in itself. God is of value. He will give Himself in Christ to me, will work His omnipotence through me, will show forth His knowledge and wisdom and love in supernatural effect through me, *if* once for all I stop thinking that *I* have any part in it save that of total inability and surrender. *Then* my life shall be marvellous indeed, not because it is my life, but because it is a life in which the Spirit of God is. Nothing, then, no earthly empire, can be too great a responsibility for—not me, but God in me. Lord Jesus, my Master and my Life, purge utterly out of me my lingering thoughts of self, so grudgingly given up. I have no powers, no talents, no ability, no education, no character, except my sin-earned worthlessness. Let me never forget that. And so let me rejoice that this mass of worthlessness that I call "I" is dead: that it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me. Now do Thy glorious will through me forever!

AND Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. Genesis xli. 46.

He stood before Pharaoh at thirty because he had been standing before God long before he

was thirty. He had simply been living in God; he was saturated with God; God was his life. To advise the king of Egypt, and to administer the empire, was an easy matter for God; and, therefore, easy for one whose whole life was God. So it should be with us. God has given Himself to us in Christ. Christ wants to be, not my external Saviour, but my entire, literal, veritable life. It will be a simple matter, then, for me to stand before a king if that is my duty. No conceivable task, responsibility, or problem of my life can baffle or even tax Christ; therefore, it cannot defeat or disturb me, while "to me to live is Christ."

GOD hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. Genesis xli. 47 to 52.

That is not only possible in every affliction, it is the *purpose* of every affliction. Whether the affliction is the result of our own sin, or is the evidence of God's loving care, apart from our sin, it may always be fruitful, and it is His will that it should be. The affliction resulting from my own wrong-doing is God's call to turn away from sin to Him; the affliction for which I am not responsible is His call to greater fruitfulness: "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." So affliction is always to be rejoiced in. If we will only take

it in this way, as God means us to, our lives shall lay up grain as the sand of the sea, until we leave off numbering, for it will be without number.

AND the seven years of famine began to come. . . . And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph. Genesis xli. 53 to 57.

How would *you* like to be such that in time of need every one would confidently turn to you for help, and never be disappointed? That is exactly what God intends you should be. It simply requires that you let the Source of every good supply replace you with Himself, and then pour Himself out in a lavish stream of omnipotent helpfulness to others, all the time. That was Joseph's secret of never-failing helpfulness to all who came to him: God was his life. God worked out this great grain administration; Joseph could never have done it. "He that believeth on me," said the One who is the Bread and Water of life, "from within him shall flow rivers of living water." Does every one who ever turns to you for anything always and only find Christ awaiting him? What a ministering life we may live!

AND Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy grain. . . . And Joseph was the governor over the land; he it was that sold to all the people. Genesis xlii. 1 to 6.

The man who was governor, and who controlled the food supply of the world, was the *brother* of these men who were driven to him by their dire need. And the One on whose shoulder is the government of the world, and in whom alone is the bread supply of the world, is my Elder Brother. It is something of a privilege to be thus related to the One to whom the whole world in its hunger and famine must turn, is it not? I have treated Him as badly as Joseph's brothers once treated *him;* but He has forgotten it, blotted it out, put it forever behind Him. He takes me right into the heavenly court life with Himself, and gives me Himself as my food and my life forever. Why should I ever again go hungry on the husks of my own poor, selfish planning and providing?

AND Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly with them. Genesis xlii. 7, 8.

And so may even our Elder Brother do with us as did this younger brother of these men, who loved them, and had the bread of their life, and was to be a saviour to them. There are times when Christ seems to make Himself strange unto us, and to deal with us in a way that we cannot comprehend. *Then* is the time to trust Him. Whatever He does, or seems to do, He does it

in a love that yearns over us. And if He does seem to be remote from us or harsh with us in any way, we may be pretty sure that it is something of our doing that has caused this. He is holding us all the time in His blessed and eternal grip of love.

NAY, my Lord, . . . we are true men.
Genesis xlii. 9 to 11.

It must have rung strangely in Joseph's ears to hear these men who were liars and his would-be murderers protesting, "We are true men." They were, indeed, speaking the truth just then as to the facts they gave him; but they were not "true men." His blood was on their heads; and they had never, so far as we know, confessed their guilt to their father. Yet they probably counted themselves respectable, God-fearing citizens. I have as little right to claim any virtue in the presence of my Elder Brother, my Saviour and Master, Jesus Christ. I may think I am a "true man"; but I know that there is a multitude of forgotten and undiscovered and unrepaired sins in my life, in the face of which I am a complete and hopeless and worthless failure —of myself. Only as I recognize this and confess it daily, hourly, can my Christ replace my worthless life with His glorious Self. Oh, how I praise Him that, as He crucifies me with Himself,

it is no longer I, the awful failure, that lives, but Christ liveth in me!

YE are spies. . . . And he put them all together into ward three days. Genesis xlii. 12 to 17.

It must have been bitterly hard for them to be so misjudged and ill-treated. They did not know that their own brother was doing all this for no other purpose than to work out his loving plans for them. It is hard when we are misjudged and unfairly condemned. But we may be confident that always, when God permits it, it is only because He has loving plans for us that He would work out that way. If we accept the injustice in trust and love, it may be the means of drawing us and the one who has wronged us into a blessedly close fellowship in the Christ whose love keeps us undisturbed and loving through it all. Let me never be anxious or angry when I am condemned for having done right.

WE are verily guilty concerning our brother; . . . therefore is this distress come upon us. . . . Then Joseph commanded to fill their vessels with grain, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way. Genesis xlii. 18 to 25.

Thus does my consciousness of guilt cry out

against me, as I fear my complete overwhelming and destruction because of it; and thus does my Saviour "punish" me for it: He bears its full penalty for me, fills my vessels with grain, restores to me all that I have ever given Him, and gives me a King's provision for the way. I give Him my life: He gives it back, recreated and glorified into His likeness. Every vessel of my life is heaped up, pressed down, and running over with His royal bounty. But the best of all is His Provision for the way: nothing less than Himself. Jesus Christ is my Way; and He is my Life. Thus has He given Himself to me, so that "to me to live is Christ." I am "verily guilty" concerning Him whom I have betrayed and crucified; I turn to Him in my famine; and this is my reward: Christ is my Life.

HE espied his money: . . . and their heart failed them. . . . Every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and . . . they were afraid. . . . Me have ye bereaved of my children: . . . all these things are against me. Genesis xlii. 26 to 38.

So God kept piling up His evidences of His love for them, and working out His loving and wonderful plans for them; and they were afraid, for all these things were against them. The money returned was not a plot to trap them:

it was their brother's big-hearted generosity. Joseph was not taken from Jacob: he was saved that through the son the father might be saved, and end his life in his son's loving care. Simeon was not taken from Jacob: he was held as a hostage to insure the working out of the loving plans for Jacob and all the family. But all these things were against them, and they were afraid. Thus do I fear and rebel against my Father's wonderful and loving plans for the enriching of my life. Oh, may I see the folly and the sin of my distrust of Him, and rejoice in the things that are against me, hereafter, forever, that He may do His glorious will for me, unhindered by my blindness and stupidity! How rich He will make my life if only my heart shall always sing, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

AND the famine was sore. . . . They had eaten up the grain which they had. . . . Except we had lingered, surely we had now returned. . . . And they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went. Genesis xliii. 1 to 15.

Praise God for the famine in our life that drives us in utter helplessness back to Him! Praise Him that what we have gets eaten up, and we must turn to Him for more. But how like unto the faltering, fearful family of Israel and his sons,

we act! We could find absolute relief, sufficiency, satisfaction in Jesus Christ; yet we delay, debate, wonder, waste time, and stay hungry. When finally in desperation we are driven to Him we think we must do some great thing to meet His terms, and we try to carry "double money" in all sorts of ways, to make sure of what He is yearningly waiting to *give* us. He *does* ask us for one thing, and one only: and that is the dearest possession of our lives. With Israel's family the dearest possession was Benjamin. When we lay down our dearest possession, then the treasures of the kingdom are flung open to us and lavished into our life. O Master, show me this morning how to yield myself up to Thee completely, and then how to ask of Thee things great enough to be worthy of a King's giving. Make me equal in my requests to Thy infinite eagerness to give.

AND when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Bring the men into the house, and slay, and make ready; for the men shall dine with me at noon. Genesis xliii. 16.

When their brother, who was to be their saviour, saw that they had brought with them the dearest possession of their family, then went forth the instant word for a king's feast to be prepared for them. That is all that my Saviour

is waiting for to lavish the fullness of His bounty upon me: my bringing to Him the dearest possession of my life—myself, in unconditional, seemingly costly and eternal surrender, in confessed helplessness and awful need, to His mastery. Then He gives the word to come into His own house, and eat at the table of the palace—the best food that He Himself partakes of. The surrender of Benjamin, their costliest possession, was the key to the treasures of the kingdom—yes, to the very recognition of Joseph, for these brothers and Jacob. The surrender of the costliest possession of my life is the key to the treasures of the kingdom for me—yes, even to the recognition and full appropriation of Christ as my whole and only Life. Oh, Lord Jesus, show me more that I may give up, that I may have more of Thee!

BROUGHT the men to Joseph's house. And the men were afraid. . . . Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure. . . . And he brought Simeon out unto them. . . . And they made ready the present against Joseph's coming. Genesis xliii. 17 to 25.

What a picture it is! The men, frightened, distressed, dreading a life of bondage and poverty, trying to explain, hoping that their little

gift will help matters: and the prince of the kingdom all the time having prepared for them not only a feast such as only a king could give, but a lifetime of wealth and love. How often have I been in distress over the preparations that my Master and Saviour was making for my rich blessing; yet, my fear and distrust did not turn Him against me! Over this chapter is the page-heading in my Bible, "Joseph Feasts with his Brothers." Over their fears was that glad, shining fact which was just at hand. And he was their *brother*, not their ruler. What a wonderful and glorious Saviour I have! How He lavishes His love upon me! How I long to yield more and more to Him, until the completeness of my yielding shall let Him show me the completeness of His love!

IS your father well? . . . God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his heart yearned. Genesis xliii. 26 to 34.

Through the whole record of this second meeting of the brothers with Joseph there runs one note that out-sounds every other: Joseph's yearning love for them all. Everything he said and did was from that standpoint, that motive, only. They must have noticed, and have been grateful for his kindliness; but they did not yet know the heart-break of passionate love that was

back of it all. Nor do we yet know the love of Christ that is back of all that He does for us. We know something of it; we could know more, if we would yield to it more; if we should know all, we should never, could never, sin against it again. Let us think more of Christ's love, seek to know more of it, meditate more upon it, lose ourselves in more complete abandonment in it.

THE Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. Genesis xliii. 32 to 34.

To be sure, the Egyptians would not have had any bread at all to eat if it had not been for a Hebrew; but that was a minor matter compared with the importance of their ignorant, sin-blind prejudice. The facts are always of less importance than a prejudice, when a prejudice is allowed to sway. And no one can see true, judge accurately, or even know what the facts are, when the blight of prejudice is permitted to strike in. Prejudice is caused always and only by one thing: self-sufficiency, which is sin. O Lord Jesus, cleanse me from my self-satisfied prejudices! The only cure is Thyself, Thy boundless love, in me, which shall always count others better than myself, and thus shall reveal to me their good, and show me the real facts as they are. Thy love is never blind; my selfish-

ness is always blind. Let myself and sin be the only abomination in my sight. Let Thy love be the lens through which the beauty in all lives about me is revealed to me.

PUT my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest. . . . And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes. . . . And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. . . . I am Joseph your brother . . . to save you alive by a great deliverance. . . . And he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him. Genesis xliv. 1 to xlv. 15.

All that Joseph had done in seeming cruelty was evidently done only in love, to throw into clearer, sharper relief the full expression of his saving love and forgiveness when the time for that should come. And now it has come: and the heart-break of the sharp joy of the unexpected restoration of everything that had seemed to be lost, added to a wealth and happiness of an assured future beyond anything that the wildest dreams of these sinning brothers had ever pictured —there is nothing like it in all human history and experience, except the greater joy of forgiveness in the undreamed-of love of our forgiving heavenly Father through His Son, our Saviour, and Life, and Elder Brother.

"And after that his brethren talked with him." After the glory-shock of our full restoration into the body of Christ, the rest of our lifetime is not long enough for the conversation and communion we must have with Him. That is why we must "pray without ceasing"; we cannot help it.

AND when they were gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? . . . Then they rent their clothes, . . . and returned to the city. Genesis xliv. 1 to 13.

From the highest hopes, with light hearts and joyful assurance of protection and plenty, they are plunged into the darkness of catastrophe, bewildered and dazed, crushed by the suddenness and the cruel injustice of it all. They had just been feasting with Joseph; now they are led back under arrest, with evidence hopelessly against them. Could they continue to trust Joseph and God in this affliction? It is just the sort of sudden, unaccountable affliction that may strike into our lives at any time, and by the express order of the Father who loves us most, and at whose table we have just been feasting. If it does, oh, let us trust Him to the uttermost, even while He seems to be slaying us, and with us

every dearest hope! We know that Joseph did this in love; and *we* see why, for the whole story is before us. We may be infinitely surer that our Father is doing it in greater love than Joseph had, even while we cannot see why, and while the end of *our* story is blindingly hidden from us. There is nothing we can do but trust. But if we trust, then speedily we find that there is so much more that we can do. God will become dearer to us then, and His love richer and sweeter, than ever He was to us before He asked us to trust Him in such blindness and sorrow.

AND thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. . . . Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord. . . . Then Joseph could not refrain himself . . . and he . . . made himself known unto his brethren. Genesis xliv. 14 to xlvi. 1.

So it is always: real sacrifice, unto complete surrender of self, brings the revealing of God in His fullness to us. As we had already seen, it was only on condition of Jacob's releasing and the brethren's bringing the best they had, Benjamin, that they could even see Joseph's face again. But when Judah went farther than this, and offered himself to be Joseph's slave forever,

then it was that Joseph could keep back nothing, but found himself compelled to reveal everything to those for whom his heart yearned. It is God's own way with us. God in Jesus Christ does not, and apparently cannot, make Himself fully known, in His personality and love, until we have surrendered to Him, unconditionally and forever, not only all we have but all we are. *Then* God can refrain no longer, but lavishes upon us, in Christ, such a revealing of Himself that it cannot be told in words. God had to sacrifice Himself, in Christ, in order thus to reveal Himself to us; but His sacrifice alone will not suffice: not until we in turn have sacrificed ourself to Him is the revelation possible and complete. But what a revelation it is! What glory does God give us in the life that is Christ as our life! How it changes everything for us thereafter, as for Joseph's brothers, from famine to royal abundance! How little is our sacrifice when measured by the return: Christ Jesus our Life!

AND Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. . . . And God sent me before you to preserve you. . . . And he kissed all his brethren. Genesis xlv. 2 to 15.

The very crucifixion of Christ by mankind was turned by God into the deliverance of mankind. Could man conceive of such a love, which turns man's own sin into the blessing of redemption? It is not that sin ever, under any circumstances, is or can be a blessing: the blessing lies in God's attitude toward the sinner. It was not the crucifixion, but Christ's use of the crucifixion, that saved mankind. It was not the hatred of Joseph's brothers, but Joseph's use of the results of that hatred, that saved their lives. But what a surpassing forgiveness and love it was in Joseph that could tell them with tear-brimming eyes not to be troubled over what they had done to him! Yet God's love in Christ is greater. Oh, may I lose myself in it in an abandonment of trust and gratitude that shall let Him show me His love that passeth knowledge, and, through me, show it ceaselessly to others!

COME unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. . . . Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. Genesis xlv. 16 to 20.

It was a kingly offer. So is the offer that God makes us in Christ. Suppose these men had held back because they saw that they would have to lose some of their own belongings!

Suppose they had held on to their famine-stricken property in Canaan, and had declined to trust the king! Well, they would probably have starved, or dragged out a half-starved existence. Christ asks us to come unto Him; He promises us the best that the God of heaven and earth can bestow; He urges us to cut loose from all that we have; for the good of the kingdom of heaven, now and here, is pledged to us instead. We must choose between letting our belongings entirely go or missing the fullness of the wealth that Christ offers. How hardly do we let our stuff go! But how He dazzles our eyes with His wealth, *our* wealth in Him, when we do! Christ Jesus, purge away my last lingering desire for any vestige of my old belongings which is hindering my full inheritance in Thee.

AND Joseph gave them . . . provision for the way. Genesis xlv. 21 to 24.

Perhaps they would have been unable to undertake the difficult task of moving their families back to Egypt without this provision. In any case, it was a regal provision, with every need lavishly met. So God sees that we are supernaturally enabled to travel every step of the way that He maps out for us. "The resources of the Christian life," Dr. Robert F. Horton has said, "are just Jesus Christ." *He* is our regal

provision for the way. He *is* the Way. In Him our progress through life to the goal that God has set for us and invites us into, is just a royal march of triumph, surrounded by wealth and comfort. Do we believe in Christ enough to let Him prove this? For it is so; and if we are not finding it so, the fault is not Christ's. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

AND they told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt. . . . It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die. Genesis xlv. 25 to 28.

There are heart-breaks of joy in God's plan for His children. We can no more imagine the good things that He has waiting ahead for us, both in this life and in the life to come, than Jacob could have imagined his lost boy alive and ruling Egypt. That is the sort of miracle-surprise awaiting me daily in the tingling, vibrant, throbbing life of Jesus Christ who is *my* life, when I let Him fulfill His will and lavish Himself and His gifts and surprises upon me. When I let Him become all that there is of me what a here and hereafter He gives me when I can say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"!

CAME to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake, . . . I am God, the God of thy father : fear not. Genesis xlvi. 1 to 7.

God reaffirms His best promises of old whenever we let Him do so. Just now Israel was at the old home, where he and Esau had spent their youth. It was at Beersheba also that Isaac had found peace from his enemies (xxvi. 23–33), and God had renewed with him the covenant of Abraham. Now an entirely new chapter of Israel's life is opening—the last on earth; and God tells him quietly, using his boyhood name, that He is the same unchanging God, and that His plans for him and his seed are unchanged and assured. The best promises that God has ever made to me are still guaranteed to me by His inviolable word. Oh, may I remember this whenever I am tempted to doubt and wonder whether I used to hope too much! We cannot hope too much from God.

ALL the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were threescore and ten. Genesis xlvi. 8 to 27.

And this was the man who, some seventy years before, had fled from his home and everything he held dear, alone, a fugitive, because he had broken his father's heart and all but made

his brother a murderer by his tricky, selfish, lying ways. Now, loved, honoured, wealthy, surrounded by children and grandchildren, he is on his way to the court of Egypt to spend the remaining years of his life in an atmosphere of love, blessing, and honour beyond anything that he has yet known. And all because, one night at the ford of Jabbok, he yielded himself up forever to the service and mastery of God. That is the way of the surrendered life. We "give up" everything—everything that is poisoning and ruining our life: and we get heaven's wealth now and here. We give up Self, and we get God. The surrendered life brings the life that is Christ.

AND Joseph . . . went up to meet Israel his father; . . . and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive. Genesis xlvi. 28 to 34.

Praise God for our blessed, loving fathers! What a reunion we are going to have with them, some day, on the Other Side! If tears of joy are allowed in heaven, we shall shed them "a good while" that day of the reunion. God calls Himself our heavenly Father, and thereby has made His relationship to us more like that of earthly father and child than any other human

relationship. Joseph's love for his father was exceeded by his father's love for Joseph. It is always so. The one who does most for the other loves most. We love God "because He first loved us"; and His greater love is the school of our lesser love. And His supremest love for us is Christ, the gift of the Father's life poured out for us in Christ our life.

TO sojourn in the land are we come; for there is no pasture for thy servants' flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan. . . . The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell. Genesis xlvii. 1 to 6.

Did you ever come to a time of the most awful famine, spiritual famine, in your life, when there was no pasture to feed upon? Joseph is such a marvellous type of Christ all through his life-story. So Christ at such a time takes the matter Himself for us to the throne of God. He tells God we are His own brothers. And what is the answer? "The kingdom of heaven is before thee; in the *best* of the kingdom make thy brethren to dwell." Do you realize what it means to have Jesus Christ intercede for you—the Christ whom you repudiated by your own sin? Pharaoh knew not these men; but he knew Joseph; and nothing was too good for

Joseph and every relative of Joseph. And we are "joint heirs with Christ." Because of Christ, God flings wide open the whole kingdom and simply asks that we take its *best.* Out of famine, into the best that the kingdom affords. Not only that, but rulers of the King's own property. O Lord Jesus, forgive my unfaith! Open my sin-bound, self-centered eyes to the wonders of Thy love. Teach me how to receive more. The Best of the kingdom: that means Thee. I take Thee, Lord, as my feast of eternal life.

AND Jacob said unto Pharaoh, . . . Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life. Genesis xlvii. 7 to 10.

In that sad admission Jacob showed the presence of God in his life. It is the glory of our life that we can see our own awful sin, and suffer in its contemplation, and acknowledge it freely to God. If we could not do that, life would be hopeless indeed. No man can see his own sin save by the power of the Holy Spirit, whose saving work it is to convict us of sin. There is rich hope for us when our past life appears to us as one black, miserable failure except for Christ's part in it. Oh, the joy of just telling God so! The privilege of acknowledging our sin is that which a little child has in coming to its mother and confessing.

But we can go farther, in Christ, than simply having our sins completely forgiven. We can be kept from sinning. And therein we have a present heritage in Christ beyond that of the best of the Old Testament saints. Christ's complete mastery of our lives means His holding us in a life of sustained victory over willful and consciousness. If He is not able to do this, then He is a limited and insufficient Saviour. But He is not limited; and He is sufficient. He is sufficient, because "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." No Christian need, or ought, to say on his death-bed, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life." That was not Paul's valedictory. In Christ he may say with Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing."

AND Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land. . . . And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren. Genesis xlvii. 11, 12.

Not only was Egypt, the land of plenty, which

stood for the bread supply of the world during this famine time, now the permanent home of these men, but the *best* that that land could offer was theirs. And it was theirs with permanent provision for themselves and their families, because of what was done for them by the man whom they had hated and tried forever to do away with. Therein is Joseph's life-story the wonderful foreshadowing of the work of Jesus Christ. We have, by our sin and repudiation of all that Christ stands for, rejected Him over and over again, ever since we deliberately enlisted in His service. We have revolted and tried to cast off His bonds of love. What has been His retaliation? He has not only persistently, irresistibly held us within the kingdom of heaven, the land of plenty, but He has insisted on giving us the best that that kingdom affords, and nourishing us with nothing less than Himself, as our Bread of Life. Now let us once and for all give up our resistance against Him! For His love will win in the end anyway; why should we delay its fullest outworkings for us and through us?

AND there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore. . . . Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants . . . that we may live, and not die. Genesis xlvii. 13 to 22.

How good God is to starve us steadily and irresistibly into that increasing surrender to Him which finally has to yield completely, letting go not only our dearest possessions but our very selves in eternal slavery to His love, as the price of that Bread of Life which we must have, or die! Whatever may have been Joseph's motives in this transaction, there is no doubt about God's motives toward us. He knows that so long as we keep back from Him a single possession, and so long as we retain the mastery or possession of our own lives, we cannot have the life more abundant that He longs to give us. And so He lovingly sees to it that we starve on everything else than the only and all-satisfying Bread of Life, Jesus Christ His Son, which we can have in fullness only on God's own terms: unconditional surrender into eternal slavery—the slavery of the bond service of love. But when we have finally and in desperation sold out—body, mind, soul, and spirit, forever—to this loving King, what a feast, an eternal feast, He provides! Oh, the joy and health and love and power and fullness of the Life that is Christ!

I HAVE bought you this day: . . . here is seed for you. . . . Ye shall give a fifth unto Pharaoh. . . . Thou hast saved our lives:

. . . *we will be Pharaoh's servants.* Genesis xlvii. 23 to 26.

It had been a choice between retaining their liberty and dying, or surrendering to the king and finding life and provision. They wisely surrendered, and now were glad to accept the king's own terms of tribute to him. We are in exactly the same relation to Him who has bought us out of death into life. Yet some of us question whether, on very limited incomes, we ought to be expected to render to our King, not a fifth, but only a tenth, of that which is wholly the result of His bounty to us! Shall we not come up near the standard of Old Egypt, and with gratitude and heartiness pay our apportionment with systematic regularity over into the Lord's treasury? The fact is, nine-tenths of our income will go farther than ten-tenths, if we are really His servants and pay Him outright, with gratitude and heartiness, the other tenth.

AND Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they gat them possessions therein, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly. Genesis xlvii. 27.

The best of the land was Goshen (xlvii. 6). And there these men and their families were living, while riches increased unto them, and their

life multiplied and extended. It was through no merit of their own that they were there; it had come to pass because just one man, their brother, had let God hold him inviolably true to God's will. Are any living "in the best of the land" of the kingdom of heaven on earth, their famine turned into plenty, spiritual possessions multiplying unto them, and their spiritual life propagated in others unto the same blessing, because *you* have thus let Christ use you in inviolable obedience to His will? To see such results in the lives of others because we have lived, or rather, because Christ lives in us, ought to be the normal experience of Christ's disciples on earth to-day. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be My disciples." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit."

AND the time drew near that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found favour in thy sight, . . . deal kindly and truly with me. Genesis xlvii. 28 to 31.

Jacob's sin was finding him out. There had been a day, some seventy years before, when his father, Isaac, lay near the point of death, old and feeble, and *his* son, Jacob, came to him with a blasphemous lie, and broke his father's heart,

and made his brother a murderer in spirit and purpose. Was the old man Israel thinking of this as he entreated his boy Joseph now to speak the truth to him, and asked him to seal it with an oath? Joseph's word was to be trusted. Joseph kept his word: his father's longing was fully met, after years of peaceful and happy life in the midst of plenty in Egypt, surrounded by his dear ones. And so Jacob's sin found him out. That is the "finding out" of which W. M. Clow, in "The Cross in Christian Experience," reminds us. We sin, foully and hopelessly; and God pursues us inescapably with His love. The life of His Son Jesus Christ is God's return to us for our sin. Joseph's treatment of Israel is God's return for Jacob's treatment of Esau. Do our hearts not break as we face God's love? Why does He treat us so? Because He is God, and we are what we are. Our sin is so hopeless that nothing less than the self-surrendered love of our God who is Love could save us. But how glorious and abundant a salvation it is! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a

salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter i. 3–5).

ONE said to Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. Genesis xlviii. 1, 2.

Praise God for the love of father and son! At its best, it is always the same, and always one of the heaven sent riches of this life. Can you not see the picture in these two verses? Word comes to Joseph: "Your father is sick." A throb of pain goes through his heart. Everything is dropped—state business, personal affairs, all: he must be with his father at once. And his boys must see their grandfather again; they go with him; and as they go he tells them, with glistening eyes and a strange break in his voice, what a father Jacob has always been to him, *always*. They don't appreciate their grandfather now, he says, but they will; the whole world will, some day,—and his voice breaks again. It is only Israel, God's man, whom Joseph sees now in his father; and, in the midst of his pain, his heart sings for joy for the man that his father is, and for what his father has meant to him, and taught him all his life long, from the old farm days of the coat of many colours

down to the present years of peace and loving family fellowship in Egypt. Everything that he is Joseph owes to Jacob and he knows it.

But word has come to the old man, worn with sickness, that Joseph is on the way. See the old-time light flash from Jacob's eye, as he springs up! "My boy *Joseph* coming? I must be ready for him." And as he waits, in eager, tensely loving expectation, he thanks God for Joseph. How much better Joseph has done than his father ever did, he muses; and tears of keen sorrow come as he thinks again, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life." He forgets—but Joseph never will—that it was his boyhood training of Joseph in the old home that let God into Joseph's life—the God of Abraham and Isaac—in such fullness and blessedness that the boy and man never got away from that precious heritage. Jacob is Joseph's glory, Joseph is Jacob's glory. But neither knows it of himself, as their hearts are breaking with love in the thought that this may be their last meeting.

Oh, you who have had God-led fathers, you have realized what it means, have you not? Can *I* ever forget it? Can I ever forget the lovelight that burned from my father's eyes into my heart as he told me how bitterly he reproached himself for not having been a better man and father? He! Can I ever forget that

every blessing that has ever come into my life is the result of his prayers and of God in his life? And can I ever forget the word that came to me on the 7th of December, 1903, in the midst of a busy forenoon at the office, that he was ill, very ill; or the pain that thrust me through as I hurried to his home? The next day was his last on earth.

Our heavenly Father, Thou hast shown us who Thou art through our earthly fathers. We know Thee because we know them, and they knew Thee. In Christ they and we are one, and one with Thee. And we thank Thee for revealing Thyself to us through our fathers. We thank Thee for their lavished, costly love. May we make their past a success. May we not dishonour their name. May they, as they watch us from here or overhead, see Christ in us because we see Christ in them.

GOD Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company of peoples, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. Genesis xlviii. 3 to 7.

Praise God for the memory of our great experiences of Him! And if we have not had them, we ought to have them, and we may have them by seeking for them. It is a

great day when God makes Himself known to a man in utterly new fullness, showing him Christ not only as his Saviour, but as his life: Christ as the entire being, the whole man, body, mind, soul, and spirit. And in that flood-tide of new blessing God promises to the man such spiritual fruit-bearing as he had never before known was possible (for it is now Christ, not the man, who will do the whole work), and God promises, too, that the new glory-blessing that has come shall be multiplied, through the man out into the lives of a company of peoples, and "this land," the new wealth, Christ the life, shall be given unto all these "for an everlasting possession." Can such a day ever be forgotten? Like all our best blessings and experiences, it is a sheer, outright gift from God. It is not a matter of growth, or cultivation, by ourselves: it is just "ask, and ye shall *receive*, that your joy may be full." Father, hold us truer to the rich memory of our rich past!

I HAD not thought to see thy face: and lo, God hath let me see thy seed also. And Joseph bowed himself with his face to the earth. Genesis xlviii. 8 to 12.

That is the way God has always dealt with me. It is His way with all His people: "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." How

vividly Jacob must have remembered the dreary years when he had given up all hope of ever seeing his son again on earth! How he must have recalled the heart-break of that day when he *knew* that his boy was destroyed, for he had seen his blood-stained coat! All hope gone; but God still in charge; and now Joseph and Joseph's sons are before him, in safety and health and happiness! And as it all swept over Joseph, with the memory of that day of his brothers' betrayal, and the years of hardship and injustice and perhaps doubt in Egypt, is it strange that he "bowed himself with his face to the earth" before his father and his father's God? Shall we not remember this wonderful scene the next time things get so black that all hope seems dead? The same God who raised up seed to Jacob through his "dead" boy Joseph is still God: *our* God and *our* Father. And He can do more for us through His Son and His Holy Spirit to-day, than He could for Jacob and Joseph. Father, we praise Thee, we love Thee, and we trust Thee.

THE God before whom my fathers . . . did walk, the God who hath fed me all my life long unto this day, . . . bless the lads. . . . Howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he. Genesis xlviii. 13 to 22.

It was a strange and beautiful and dramatic scene, this death-bed benediction of one of the giant figures of history upon the sons of his son. Notice that "he blessed Joseph, and said, God bless the lads." He blessed Joseph by blessing the boys. God's blessing of the children is His blessing upon the father. Any true father would rather have it so.

But the two conspicuous truths here are these: God's unchanging, unfailing, and all-providing love; and the arbitrary and often unexplained way in which God determines and distributes His earthly gifts or assignments. Joseph assumed that his first-born should have the greater temporal blessing. God said, "No"; that it was for the younger one. Jacob himself was a younger son, yet his supremacy over the older had been foretold by God before his birth. So he now foretells a like blessing for Ephraim, the younger. But God's all-sufficient love was pledged to both: and that was enough. If we have God's love, we may rejoice when that love directs us into a less conspicuous place than our younger brother. God was as loving toward Manasseh as toward Ephraim.

ASSEMBLE yourselves, . . . ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. Reuben, . . . thou shalt not have the preëmi-

nence. . . . Simeon and Levi . . . cursed be their anger . . . Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise. Genesis xlix. 1 to 12.

Another wonderful scene is this, of the death-bed prophecy-song of Israel unto that group of strong men his sons. Remember that here was the founder of the nation Israel; and here were the founders of the twelve tribes that played and shall yet play a larger part in the world's history than all the rest of the world put together. With a vision given him because of his years of surrendered living unto God, Israel foretells with fearless truthfulness the results of the life choices of these his own sons. Sin was to have its own sure reward; so was righteousness.

Judah, in the hour of the supreme test that Joseph put on the brothers just before disclosing himself, had shown his self-crucifying readiness to live or die for others; and from Judah was to come Jesus. The same choices and results confront me to-day. Self-will, and violence against God and my fellows; or self-death, and Christ giving Himself through me to the world.

ZEBULUN . . . shall be for a haven of ships. . . . Issachar . . . bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant under task-work. . . . Dan shall be a serpent in the way.

. . . *I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah.* Genesis xlix. 13 to 21.

In the sons of Israel was the whole gamut of human life. We can choose from the list what we will for ourselves. And in Christ alone we find that we can choose and become the better parts of the family of Israel. Would we be a haven of ships? Christ as our life can make of us a veritable haven for all who thus need us. To fill the glorious place of a servant under task-work is simply to surrender unconditionally to Him who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; then we shall be the servant of all. And only those in Christ can escape being "serpents in the way" of all about them. Our so-called best without Him is only as an adder's poison.

Notice how Israel interrupts himself in the midst of his foretelling to cry, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Jehovah." May that be our constant remembrance! Not only have we now a full and sufficient salvation in Christ Jesus, but we are waiting for its completion: for the final casting off of the body of corruption: for His coming again to complete the salvation of the world and the universe, until God shall be all and in all. As we wait in keen, tense expectation of that, Christ can evermore occupy us with Himself, and use us to His honour and glory.

JOSEPH is . . . a fruitful bough by a fountain. . . . And the arms of his hands were made strong, by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob. . . . The blessings of thy father . . . shall be . . . on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Genesis xlix. 22 to 26.

Here is Christ in the Old Testament as plainly as Christ in the New. The blessings of Joseph are the blessings that Christ lavishes upon us when we meet the conditions as Joseph did. Would I be "a fruitful bough"? "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." By what fountain shall I thrive? "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." But I need strength to replace my pitiful weakness. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And all that I saw of Christ's blessings lavished upon my father are pledged in His covenant-blood to me, if I will be "separate from" the things of my brethren of the world which war against God and His will. The margin tells us that to be "separate from" is to be "prince among." Christ does not ask His followers to take the fag end of things. Only those who have died to self and been replaced by Christ

know the fullness of enjoyment in, and possession of, even the best *things of this world.* His promises pledge this. What a program Christ has made for us!

AND when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he . . . yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. Genesis xlix. 27 to l. 3.

There is no other day in the life of a man who has had a good father like the day when that father finally leaves him. He may have thought he was ready for it, and that he knew what it would be like; but he was not. Joseph, the most capable of all the sons, seems to have felt his loss the most keenly. Life would always be different for him now. Never again could he turn to that loving, experienced, wise father for counsel. Oh, the strangeness of it all! Something has gone out of life that was greater than we knew. Life can never be the same again, we think. And it is not. For just there God comes in. God would mean more to a man, after his earthly father is gone, than He ever did before. And so we are driven from the lesser resource to the greater, and our father's God becomes our God in a new and richer way. And even the father and son are sometimes more closely united

than before. There may be a consciousness of spiritual fellowship with the father who has cast off the body, keener than any that was had while the body was the barrier to such fellowship.

What a comfort in the phrase "Gathered unto his people"! The people of the family of God live in heaven. When a member of such a family dies, he goes right to his own dear ones in heaven. The family circle over there is growing larger all the time, never to be broken again. And all this has been done for us by Christ Jesus. Only in Him was it possible. Do we thank Him constantly enough, who took into His own veins our death, and forever broke the power of death for us?

LO, I die: in my grave . . . in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. . . . And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house. Genesis l. 4 to 14.

God's love followed even Jacob's dead body, in the same way that it had enriched him all through his life. Jacob asked simply that he be allowed to sleep with his fathers in his homeland. God not only granted his request, but made it the occasion of honouring him far beyond any-

thing that he had asked. God never can stop with merely meeting our right desires. He goes lavishly beyond them. Ask or expect what we will of Him, He always does better. We have never asked enough. We never can, in this life: He will always better it. That is His purpose, His joy. Not only of tithing, but of all our relationship with Him, He keeps saying: "Prove Me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." You have seen the graphic arrangement that has been made of His word through Paul:

All that we ask.
All that we ask or think.
Above all that we ask or think.
Abundantly above all that we ask or think.
Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.
According to the power that worketh in us.

Oh, that we would just press on in ever bolder measure, with our requests, into the heart of God! Ask, He says; ask, ask, ask; and ye *shall* receive—but always more than you ask.

IT may be that Joseph will . . . fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him. . . . And Joseph wept. . . . And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: . . . I will nourish you, and your little ones. Genesis l. 15 to 21.

How it must have cut Joseph to the heart to learn that his brothers were afraid of him! That they were actually asking him now to forgive them! Could it be so, after all that he had done to show them his love, and after that day of days when he had sent all men out from him and had first made himself known unto them? Yet even this evidence of their utter failure to understand or even to believe in his love did not dim his love one iota, wound him though it did. He only loved them more, as their pitiable need of a better understanding of his love showed itself so cruelly. He spoke right to their hearts, and he convinced them. We can hear him saying: "Forgive you? I have nothing to forgive."

But it is just the way I treat my Saviour and Master. I find myself nervously and anxiously bringing Him my every infraction of His dear will and asking Him, insistently and laboriously, to forgive me. It must only wound Him afresh. Not that He does not want us to seek forgiveness after sin; but it must be that it would be more pleasing to Him for us to live in a quiet, unanxious resting in His constant forgiveness than to keep running to Him every little while with a fresh inquiry as to His forgiveness, as though our welfare in Him depended on our accurate bookkeeping in the forgiveness account, instead of on the warm, incessant, cleansing

Gulf Stream of His love. Oh, let us trust Him more quietly. Let us lose ourselves and all thought of ourselves and our condition in an overwhelmed realization of Himself, His love, His power, His unfailing forgiveness, as our Life.

AND Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Genesis l. 22 to 26.

The keeping of God's promises does not depend upon the life or death of any man. What an eternally blessed comfort this truth is to us! Those things for which the Spirit of the living God has impelled me to pray, which I know are in accordance with His will, and for which I am praying in faith and in Christ's name, *nothing can defeat.* They are accomplished now, in God's timeless eternity. If they have to do with His leading certain of His children out of Egypt into the promised land of His kingdom, *He will do it*, and nothing can prevent it. I may die, and never see it in the flesh. That is a minor matter. It will be done, for God has promised. By faith I accept this and praise God for it. Let not Joseph's faith exceed mine (Heb. xi. 22). Let me plan confidently for the outcome. "For I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I

have committed to Him against that day" (1 Tim. i. 12).

GENESIS, the Book of the Beginnings of God's Love and Promises.

Now that we have read the book through, how the promises of God stand out in the shining radiance of His love! The Creation and the Garden of Eden were promises of a heaven on earth to men; but man would not have it so. Yet God's love at once commenced new promises: the serpent's head was to be bruised by man's heel, as in Christ Jesus it is done. Then followed the wonderful and wonderfully kept promises to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's brethren. Many times man's sin delayed God's promises, but always the promises were renewed and kept. For God is greater than man or Satan; and God's love cannot be defeated by man's distrust or Satan's attacks. And every Genesis promise of God, as every other promise of God, is wrapped up in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, the Lord and Saviour and Life of the world.

So God's promises to you and to me today are pledged in Christ's covenant book. We have done much to defeat them. We have sorely and shamefully resisted Him, wounded Him, delayed Him in what He has

pledged Himself to do for us and through us. But God's forgiving power in Christ is greater than the death power of our sin. He will keep His promises to every one who has ever received Jesus Christ as Saviour, Master, and Life. To none others are any promises made—save the awful promise of final death; and even that promise is made in love, for God is love.

God's promises are undefeatable. Satan is but an "already defeated foe." The promises of glory unthinkable pledged to us in Jesus Christ are *ours*, and they never can be taken from us; they will be redeemed beyond all that we ask or think. Oh, let us give our covenant-keeping God and Saviour His unhindered way with us, now and forever!

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